

الْقُرْآنُ الْكَرِيمُ
وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ هِيَ الْعَالَمِينَ

THE
ASCENDANT QUR'AN
Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture

VOLUME 1
Al-Fātiḥah to Al-Baqarah:141



Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Āṣī



In the Name of Allah,
the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful

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ASCENDANT QUR'AN

Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture

VOLUME 1
Al-Fātiḥah to Al-Baqarah:141

Muḥammad H. al-Āṣī

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT
Toronto London Kuala Lumpur Karachi Pretoria



Published by Crescent International Newspapers Inc. for
The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT)
1380 Stouffville Road, Richmond Hill, ON. L4E 3S3 Canada
Published simultaneously in Canada and South Africa.

The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT) is an international intellectual center of the global Islamic movement. It consists of individual activists, journalists and academics in all parts of the world who share a common commitment to developing the social and political ideas of the Islamic movement, and promoting them as an alternative worldview to that of Western civilization. For more information, visit www.islamicthought.org.

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ISBN 978-0-9688591-1-7 (hbk.: alkaline paper)

Canadian Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) Data

al-ʿĀṣī, Muḥammad Ḥ.

The Ascendant Qur'an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture /
Muḥammad Ḥ. al-ʿĀṣī — Vol. 1 of a multi-volume series.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Koran (Qur'an)
2. *Tafsīr* — Explanation of the Qur'an
3. Commentary — Analysis of the Qur'an
4. *Tafsīr* of *Sūrah al-Fāṭiḥah*
5. *Tafsīr* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*

First Printing: June 2008

Allah (ﷻ) says in His noble Book,
“Verily, Allah and His Angels send salutations on the Apostle.
O You who are firmly committed [to Allah], you too [must]
send the most worthy salutations and blessings upon him.”
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:56)

In launching this *tafsīr*, we beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless His final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), all the Prophets (ﷺ) who preceded him, and all those who, despite great difficulty and sacrifice, sincerely follow in their footsteps from the *ṣāliḥūn*, the *ṣiddiqūn*, the *shuhadā'*, and *marḥūmūn*. We also beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless and amply reward those who have helped in the publication of this *tafsīr* in whatever capacity.

— The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought

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Publisher's Foreword

The Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) last and final formal communication to all humanity. It encapsulates the complete set of principles and related behaviors that allow man to fulfill his mission on earth and lead him on a course to Allah (ﷻ), his ultimate destination. Inscribed for eternity on the *lawḥun mahfūz* (the Well-Guarded Tablet),¹ **“Nay, but this [divine writ which they reject] is a discourse sublime, upon an imperishable tablet [inscribed]”** (85:21–22), the Qur'an assumed its earthly form when it was sent down to Muhammad (ﷺ), the last messenger and the seal of prophethood. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) was not only the recipient of the divine word but also its living prototypical example, its first teacher and *mufassir* (interpreter). Muhammad's (ﷺ) task was to build a civil society founded on divine principles and a parallel social culture that could be relied upon to continually show man a path from darkness into light,

[He has sent] an apostle who conveys unto you Allah's clear messages, so that He might extract those who have made a secure commitment [to Allah] and do

righteous deeds out of the depths of darkness into the light. And whoever makes this secure commitment to Allah and does what is right and just, him will He admit into gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide beyond the count of time; indeed, a most goodly provision will Allah have granted him! (65:11).

The first few *āyāt* of the Qur'an were revealed in the solitude of the Cave of Ḥirā';² thereafter it was sent down to the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) over a period of 23 years. The Qur'an is our guide from the womb to the tomb, both at the individual as well as collective levels. It is relevant for all places and peoples, and current for all times. Allah's (ﷻ) care, compassion, love and mercy for his finest creation have been interwoven into the purpose of revelation,

It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false... (2:185).

However, Allah's (ﷻ) guidance is only available to those who guard themselves against the corrective justice of His power, those who are conscious of His living presence in human affairs, those who, in short, are *muttaqīs*, **“That divine Writ has no vacillation about it: [it is] a guide for the *muttaqīs*” (2:2)**. It provides a program of action for those who are securely committed to Allah (ﷻ),

Say [O Prophet], “Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel,” who verily, by Allah's leave, has brought down upon your heart this [divine writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tidings for the committed believer (2:97).

And upon you [too] have We bestowed from on high this divine writ for no other reason than that you might make clear unto them all [questions of faith] on which they have come to hold divergent views, and [thus offer] guidance and grace unto people who will be securely committed [to Allah] (16:64).

The integrity of the Qur'an has been vouchsafed by Allah (ﷻ) Himself, **"Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high, step by step, this consciousness and, behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption]" (15:09).** Thus the Arabic Qur'an we have in our possession today is exactly the same as the revelation received by the noble Prophet (ﷺ) more than 1,400 years ago. No other historical record, account, scroll, collection or book comes close to matching the authenticity, accuracy, and fidelity of the original revealed Qur'an to its multitude of printed and memorized copies in the world today.

From the pacesetting days of the first Qur'anic generation to the unsettled times of the modern era, Muslims have endeavored to understand its message in order to establish a culture of obedience to Allah's (ﷻ) command and conformity to His wisdom, thereby exemplifying a just directional course for the rest of humanity. There have been numerous commentaries of the Generous Book, first in Arabic and later in other languages as Islam spread to many parts of the world. While nothing compares to the eloquence, the poetic and rhetorical beauty, the subtlety of style, and the ever-expanding impact of the Qur'an in Arabic, all commentaries and translations nonetheless attempt to communicate, as best as possible, a limited human understanding of its substance, sense and gist.

There are several translations of the Qur'an in English. Most Muslims are already familiar with the ubiquitous translations of Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall,³ 'Abdullāh Yūsuf Ali,⁴ and Muḥammad Asad.⁵ The last two have also provided explanatory notes and although they are technically considered to be *tafsīrs* (exegesis) of the Qur'an, no formal explanation and analysis of Allah's (ﷻ) words, like those available in Arabic, has ever been

attempted directly in English. True, there are English translations of some well-known *tafsirs* from Arabic and Urdu respectively such as Sayyid Quṭb's *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*⁶ (*In the Shade of the Qur'an*) and Sayyid Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī's *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* (*Towards Understanding the Qur'an*).⁷ 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's 20-volume *tafsir*, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (*Equilibrium in Explaining the Qur'an*),⁸ is also being translated from Arabic into English. The question therefore arises, "Is there a need for another *tafsir* in English when several *tafsirs* already exist?" The answer, of course, is yes but before discussing it in detail, we must emphasize that the Qur'an can never be accurately translated or exhaustively commented upon; all translations can only be approximations of the actual essence and intent, and can never encompass the many layers of meanings contained in the *āyāt* of the Qur'an.

The Arabic language is extremely rich and stylistic; no other language can match its unique capacity of distilling vast amounts of information and broad concepts into a few words. For example, the entire prophetic mission from start to finish is encapsulated in just 13 Arabic words,

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

Indeed, [even aforetime] did We send forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that people may rule [each other] with equity; (57:25).

Further, the Qur'an's eloquence and poetic beauty cannot be translated word-for-word into other languages simply because every language comes embedded with its own values and developmental biases. An idiomatic expression that may be suitable in one language may not adequately convey the same meaning when literally

translated into another. For instance, there is no equivalent word or concept in the English language to directly represent the Arabic word *taqwá*. Conversely, there is no single word in the Arabic language or the Qur'anic lexicon to precisely render the concept of *nationalism*. Similarly, many more Qur'anic concepts are unknown to Western culture. This presents Islamic scholars, activists and *dā'īs* with a difficult problem. They have to face the challenge of properly delivering Qur'anic ideas through the medium of Western language, a system of verbal communication that is most antithetical to the Qur'anic culture because it evolved out of an atheistic and exclusivist historical experience. Thus all translations of *tafsīrs* from other languages into English run the risk of widening the gap between the Qur'an and its actual meaning.

While an essentially English *tafsīr* would also suffer from such structural weaknesses, its inconsistencies are likely to be less cumbersome if the *mufasssīr* is well-versed in both English and Arabic. Imam Muḥammad al-Āṣī, who has now been engaged for 10 years on this *tafsīr*, has an excellent grasp of both Arabic and English, and has been immersed in the study of the Qur'an all his life. By his own words, he has "...cooked his brains in the Qur'an." His particular talent in capturing the *sense* of the Arabic original and then projecting it with the appropriate set of English words makes him the ideal individual for this project. He is able to convey the essence of Qur'anic meanings despite the obvious limitations of the English language. This lexical faculty is all the more important in an age when the purity of the Qur'anic discourse has been polluted by translations whose authors, despite their undeniable sincerity, could not shake themselves loose from their material upbringings in a colonial or Western world dominated by self-interest.

Many factors influence the tenor and style of a *tafsīr*: the *mufasssīr's* understanding of the Qur'an, his personal preferences in highlighting some aspects over others and the contemporary historical situation in which he lives. Thus, we note that the early *mufasssīrs* concentrated on aspects of *īmān* because that was the greatest challenge facing the early generation of Muslims who encountered peoples in distant parts of the world. Later generations adopted a

philosophical approach to the study of the Qur'an, while others highlighted the historical background and the context in which certain *āyāt* were revealed. All these are useful and relevant in their peculiar settings, and they enhance the evolving compendium of Qur'anic literature for all future generations. In the contemporary age, Muslim scholars have sought inspiration from the Qur'an to guide them in their struggles against injustice and oppression. Thus, each age influences the manner in which the Qur'an is studied. Every approach is correct in its own way because the Qur'an is a vast source of knowledge. No single approach can be considered as the final or complete word.

A distinctive feature of Imam al-ʿĀṣī's *tafsīr* is the manner in which he explains the *āyāt* to make their meanings come alive. For instance, most translations render the expression, “*Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū,*” as “O you who believe!” Imam al-ʿĀṣī translates it thus, “O You who have made a secure commitment [to Allah]!” If the Qur'an is our guide — as indeed it is — then its message must be conveyed in a manner that should bring out its rich depth and purpose. The pacifist approach to studying the Qur'an must give way to a more dynamic understanding in order to facilitate the desired transformational change, first in our lives and then in society. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) overhauled the *jāhili* Arabian society as the Qur'an was being progressively revealed; yet we who are in possession of the entire Qur'an, the *Sīrah* and the *Sunnah* of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) fail to make any meaningful change in our lives, much less in the society at large. The reason is that the Prophet (ﷺ) nurtured a group of people who lived and breathed the Qur'an, who relied on its powerful and power-giving *āyāt* to overcome pressing social, economic, political and military problems. Today, we recite it only to get blessings but seldom make the effort to understand its message and subsequently implement it in our real lives outside the home or *masjid*. The other purpose we seem to have for Allah's (ﷻ) words is to recite them for the dead. The Qur'an is a book of guidance for the living, not the dead. Only when we internalize this point would we be able to permanently transform our lives.

The Muslim world in particular and the rest of the earth in general is beset by myriad problems today. They range from the illegitimacy of rulers to the gross polarization of wealth and resources to the mass inequities suffered by a people who have no representative political institutions. Despite vast natural resources, most Muslims languish in extreme poverty. To overturn such inequalities, Islamic movements are involved in intense struggles both within their societies as well as against external enemies that have invaded and occupied majority Muslim lands. Given this grim reality, it would be reasonable to expect that there are many publications, radio programs and television channels discussing and highlighting these problems; regrettably this is not the case. The Crescent International is among the few voices striving to reflect the hopes, aspirations and frustrations of the global Islamic movement. Most other publications and publishers have tended to deal with “safe” and non-controversial subjects — not so with the Crescent International and its affiliated intellectual think-tank, the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT).

The Crescent and ICIT have chronicled the global Islamic movement and the root causes of problems facing the Ummah. Like Islamic strugglers everywhere, those in the media must also demonstrate a willingness to make sacrifices for the cause they espouse. It bears mentioning that while Islamic strugglers in Palestine, Lebanon, Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere, are making great sacrifices in life and blood, one cannot say that those in the media have demonstrated the same degree of commitment. There is a hadith in which Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “...the pen of a scholar is more precious than the blood of a martyr.”⁹ This is a great honor for those involved in Islamic publications but lamentably not many have realized their true import.

The ICIT and Crescent International have neither compromised on principle nor refrained from critical analysis. We have no sponsors who would pressure us to take certain utilitarian positions or to look the other way in the face of obvious violations of Allah’s (ﷻ) social justice code. We favor and fear no one — big or small — except Allah (ﷻ), preferring to speak and write the truth. This is

not easy in an age of conformity but Islamic work has never been easy; it requires immense sacrifices; above all, it demands consistency. Despite all the difficulties accruing from some of our own limitations, we consider it a matter of high distinction to be involved in such work for the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), hoping that this would make us worthy of His mercy and grace.

It is our hope and prayer that workers and activists in the Islamic movement will find the present *tafsīr* inspirational for the disquietude associated with their ongoing sacrifice and struggle. If it serves as a platform not merely for academic discussion but for bona fide action and activism by committed Islamic workers and *mujāhids*, then we feel our efforts would have been amply rewarded. The ICIT and Crescent International have always taken an uncompromising stand on issues of justice and the right of the Islamic Movement to resist oppressors everywhere.

How successful we have been is a judgment that others must render. We are fully aware of the enormity of the task we are undertaking by publishing this *tafsīr*. We make no claims to being qualified for such a task but we are grateful to Allah (ﷻ) for giving us the opportunity to do so. We seek solace in the fact that Imam al-Āṣī's approach breaks new ground in developing a deeper and more engaging understanding of the Qur'an. While the ICIT and Crescent have concentrated on reporting and analyzing the activities of the movement, this *tafsīr* is expected to add another dimension to the emerging Islamic momentum. It will serve an important leadership function: to motivate and inspire the movement by anchoring it more firmly to Allah's (ﷻ) message in the Qur'an. We therefore feel it is natural for an institution like the ICIT, whose primary role has been the study of contemporary Islamic thought and the power perspective in the *Sīrah*, to undertake the publication of such a *tafsīr*.

The ICIT emerged on the strength of the ideas first articulated 35 years ago by Dr. Kalim Siddiqui at the Muslim Institute in London. The ICIT has worked to build on Dr. Siddiqui's endeavors by providing a platform for Muslim thinkers and "out-of-the-box" scholars everywhere. We hope that this *tafsīr* will appeal to and

attract a thinking audience, one that is sufficiently concerned about the plight of the Ummah to seriously consider the perspective presented here. The ICIT exists to capture and source the pacesetter ideas of thinking Muslims worldwide.

There are numerous terms such as *mushrik*, *mustakbir*, *ṭāghūt*, and *mustad'afūn* used in the Noble Qur'an. These must be understood in their contemporary context so that they can be usefully applied to today's conditions. The Qur'an also narrates the stories of such tyrannical figures as the Pharaoh and Nimrod.¹⁰ These are not just figures from history; they are the archetypal enemies of Allah (ﷻ) found in every age. If the stories of Pharaoh and Nimrod were just tales from history, Allah (ﷻ) would not have narrated them repeatedly in the Book of Wisdom. After all, the Qur'an is not a book of stories; it is a book of guidance for all humanity. Why is it that most Muslims are unable to make a connection between the oft-repeated descriptions of the Pharaohs and the present-day oppressors? The simple answer is that they have lost touch with the spirit of the Qur'an.

The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) transformed the *jāhili* society of Arabia and remodeled its savage people into the most upright, committed and brave human beings on earth. By contrast, today's Muslims have clearly failed to understand the message of the Qur'an in a manner that would institutionalize lasting change in their lives. We must, therefore, rectify our own inadequacies. Allah (ﷻ) tells us in the Glorious Qur'an, **"Verily, Allah will not change the condition of a people unless they change their attitude" (13:11)**. The first step on this journey is to develop a better comprehension of the Qur'an.

Imam al-Āṣī is well-placed to provide us that service. He has studied and lived the Qur'an all his adult life. I have had the honor and privilege of his acquaintance since the Islamic Revolution was launched in Iran. Our paths frequently crossed during the many conferences at university campuses in the US and Canada. Later, this extended to other parts of the world as well. His speeches and presentations are not only eloquent but have always provided a fresh perspective on all major issues. Like few other scholars today,

he has been able to bring out the deeper meanings of the Qur'an in his captivating style and has related them to the contemporary problems facing Muslims.

This *tafsīr*, whose first *juz'* is being presented here, has been serialized in the Crescent International over many years. It is finally being presented in book form. By its very nature, a newspaper or magazine does not have a long shelf life. A book will, however, satisfy the needs of permanence; and in order to accomplish the task of producing a publishable volume, this final compilation has been revised and edited by Br. 'Afif Khān in consultation with Imam al-Āṣī himself.

The *tafsīr* reflects Imam al-Āṣī's understanding of the Qur'an as developed over several decades. If it enables Muslims to look at their problems from a fresh perspective and begin to address them in earnest, then we feel our efforts in producing this work are justified. It is our hope to provide access to the tools and resources that would motivate Muslims to think critically about their problems. Then they can begin the long journey back to becoming the vibrant and dominant civilization that Allah (ﷻ) had intended them to be,

He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the [task of spreading] guidance and the *dīn* of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religion [as systems of life] — however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity/authority to aught beside Allah (9:33, 61:09).

Our sincere attachment to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Sirah of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) are the essential first steps on a road that leads to Islamic revival and reassertion.

Zafar Bangash
 Director, Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought
 Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 23 Muḥarram 1429AH

Endnotes

- 1 *lawḥun mahfūz* (the Well-Preserved Tablet) – as this is a *mutashābih āyah*, there is not any definitive information about what exactly this is. In his translation of the Qur'an, Muḥammad Asad captures the essence of preceding explanations, "Although some commentators take it in its literal sense and understand by it an actual 'heavenly tablet' upon which the Qur'an is inscribed since all eternity, to many others the phrase has always had a metaphorical meaning: namely, an allusion to the imperishable quality of this divine Writ. This interpretation is pointedly mentioned as justified by, e.g., Tabari, Baghawi, Razi or Ibn Kathir, all of whom agree that the phrase 'upon a well-guarded tablet' relates to God's promise that the Qur'an would never be corrupted, and would remain free of all arbitrary additions, diminutions and textual changes."
- 2 Ghāru Ḥirā' – a grotto (a small cave) big enough for two people, located on what is now called Jabal al-Nūr (the Mountain of Light). As the grotto would provide an unobstructed view of the Ka'bah, it is only a few miles outside of Makkah. It would take an average person one or two hours to ascend to the grotto from the base of the mountain. Before he received the revelation for the first time, Muhammad (ﷺ) had the habit of meditating in this grotto for extended periods (several days to weeks). On the Night of Power (Laylah al-Qadr) in Ramaḍān, he received the first Qur'anic revelation while in this grotto.
- 3 Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936CE) is best known for his translation of the Qur'an, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*. He maintained that the Qur'an could not be translated from the original Arabic, and thus he claimed to have rendered the meaning of its message as understood by one who had studied it for a long time. He had been a scholar of Middle Eastern, Arabic and Islamic studies long before he formally accepted Islam at the age of 37. He refused to fight on the allied side against the Turks during World War I; while the British could have used his abilities as a linguist during the war, they refused to do so, considering him a security risk. He was also an author, editor, lecturer and imam of a local masjid in the UK. While he was translating the meaning of the Qur'an into English, he befriended Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and other Egyptian scholars from al-Azhar who reviewed his translation for accuracy.
- 4 'Abdullāh Yūsuf Ali's (1872–1953CE) work, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, is perhaps the most widely distributed English translation and commentary of the Qur'an. He memorized the Qur'an at an early age and was fluent in both Arabic and English as well as his native Urdu. While studying English literature at several universities in Europe, he

also began his study of the Qur'an, concentrating on the earliest commentaries and *tafsirs* written by the likes of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī. He was also a contemporary of the great Urdu poet Muḥammad Iqbal, who recruited him to be the principal of the Islamia College in Lahore, Pakistan.

- 5 Traveler, intellectual, Qur'anic translator and interpreter, and writer, Muḥammad Asad was born in Poland in 1900 and converted to Islam in 1926. He extensively traveled in the Muslim world, writing about Muslim civil society, politics, spirituality, and more. His writings include *The Message of the Quran*, *The Road to Mecca*, and *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*.
- 6 Qur'anic interpreter, writer, and intellectual Sayyid Quṭb is one of the seminal figures of 20th-century Islam. As an Egyptian who studied in the West, he encapsulated the global Muslim youth's desire for an Islamic direction in his book, *Milestones*. His magnum opus is his *tafsir*, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān (In the Shade of the Qur'an)* which he wrote while imprisoned by Jāmal 'Abdu al-Naṣīr's government for his activism with the Muslim Brotherhood. Quṭb was executed for his views in 1966.
- 7 Founder of Pakistan's Jamāti-Islāmī party, writer, Quranic translator interpreter, intellectual, Sayyid Abū al-'Alā Mawdūdī is one of the 20th century Islam's seminal figures. Mawdūdī's prolific writings covered interpretation of hadith, ethics, social studies and the problems facing the movement of Islamic revival. His *tafsir* in Urdu, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān (Towards Understanding the Qur'an)* has shaped Islamic understanding in South Asia.
- 8 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1904–1981CE) was born to a religious family in Tabriz, Iran, where he received his early education. In 1923, he moved to Najaf, the religious center in Iraq, to study under the guidance of great scholars of his time. He returned to his native Tabriz in 1934 but the place was too small for his talents, resulting in his relocating to Qum in 1945 where he lived until the end of his sojourn in this world. In Qum, he not only taught many generations of students but also wrote extensively on many subjects, the most important of which is his *tafsir*, *Al-Miṣbāh fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*. This 20-volume *tafsir* of the noble Book has a strong philosophical bent.
- 9 From previous *tafsirs* – whenever the reference “From previous *tafsirs*” appears in the endnotes, it will refer to one or all of the following *tafsirs* in which the original hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) or sayings of other individuals may be found. The *mufasssir*, Imam al-'Āṣī, chose the first five of these because they have captured and consolidated the information in the

previously well-known *tafsīrs* including al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, and al-Rāzī. Secondly, the combination of these five delved more deeply into ideas that attempted to grasp the full meaning of the Qur'anic discourse.

Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., 6 vol.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm (better known as Tafsīr al-Manār)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1414AH), 12 vol.

Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'aṣir, 1411AH), 1st ed., 32 vol.

'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1397AH), 3rd ed., 20 vol.

Muḥammad al-Ṭāhīr Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr (better known as Tafsīr Ibn 'Āshūr)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Mu'assasah al-Tārīkh, 1420AH), 1st ed., 29 vol.

Other *tafsīrs* that were consulted but not referenced as extensively include the following four,

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (better known as Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān)*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1412AH), 12 vol.

Abū al-Qāsim Jār-Allāh Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī al-Khawārizmī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr), 4 vol.

Abū al-Faḍl Shahāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab'i al-Mathānī*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr, 1414AH), 16 vol.

Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiṣūn al-Manṣūrī (edited by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī), *Al-Muqṭaṭaf min 'Uyūn al-Tafāsīr*. (Damascus, Syria: Dār al-Qalam, 1416AH), 5 vol.

- 10 Nimrod (arabic, Nimrūd) – absolute ruler of Mesopotamia during the time of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ); he was to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) what Pharaoh was to Mūsá (ﷺ).

Editor's Foreword

There are not enough *tafsirs* of the Qur'an. What a strange statement in light of the fact that the present offering references at least 20 other *tafsirs*, with nine of them cited extensively. Generously, there might be as many as 50 *tafsirs* available in some format or another. However, when one considers the tens of billions of Muslims who have passed through worldly life, the number of *tafsirs* out there appears wholly inadequate. This is not to say that every Muslim has either the capacity or the capability to write a *tafsir*. Most *mufassirs* consume a large part of their lives in such a project. What it does suggest is that the level of interaction the ordinary present-day Muslim has with this monumental blessing from Allah (ﷻ) is both limited and weak. There should be an output of tens, if not hundreds of *tafsirs* from every generation of passing Muslims. Why?

Every Muslim who is part of the Islamic culture, who is living or has lived, has a unique interaction with the divine presence; further every Muslim community or social grouping has a similarly unique connection with Allah (ﷻ). Whether that Muslim speaks the Arabic language or not, and whether he is rich or poor, black

or white, comes from Asia or Africa, belongs to one class or another, or belongs to a white collar profession or a blue collar trade, he has still had the type of interaction with Allah (ﷻ) that every other human needs to know about. Similarly every social unit — family, community, society, civil order or indeed civilization — collectively has had an important interaction with the divine presence. This interaction generates vital information for all other communities, countries, and peoples, past and present. The information is urgent simply because we as people generally have common problems, ranging from individual anxiety to civil strife to abuse of rights and privileges. In every time and place, those who were sincerely looking for solutions to these common problems eventually came to realize that all their answers came from only one source: Allah (ﷻ). According to the words of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ), *“Your Sustainer [and Lawgiver] is One, your father is one, your din is one...”* this means that every human has a unique piece of the puzzle that, when put together, represents the common universal solution to what we understand to be the common human problem. Therefore, it is productive for human beings to get together and share their ideas. We are privileged that the Qur’an uniquely provides a universal platform for us to do so. It enables us to have access to the divine presence and provides the rules for a social infrastructure, which makes this interaction both positive and constructive.

The experience every human being has with Allah (ﷻ) is significant. And if this experience is measured against the standard of Allah’s (ﷻ) ever-present words, then every solution to every problem is consequential to every other human being that lives. This is why every human life is so precious; any human life that was somehow robbed of its potential and was ultimately extinguished in that state robs the rest of humanity from its potential life-enhancing interaction with Allah (ﷻ). Every human being represents an indispensable part of the human social congress and if his experience is conditioned with Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance and the revealed Word, then a certain nuance of that guidance is made available to the rest of humanity.

If the general body of Muslims took this approach to the Qur'an, there would have been and could be tomorrow an unlimited rush and flow of solutions coming from Allah (ﷻ), like a strong river current in the springtime. This is exactly what the body of *tafsir* literature should represent. It should come from everyone in every field; and the market should be flooded with myriad *tafsirs* elucidating a unique interaction with Allah (ﷻ), and enabling the greater body of humans to really and truly experience Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“those who are securely committed [to Allah], and whose hearts find their rest in the conscious embrace of Allah — for, truly, in the conscious attachment to Allah do [men's] hearts find their rest” (13:28).**

These realizations, in part, along with the desire to know the Qur'an better, explains why I embraced the opportunity to help bring this new *tafsir* to the attention of other Muslims. As editor, my greatest challenge has been to make as clear as possible what the *mufasssir*, Imam al-ʿĀṣī, is trying to communicate, without departing from the tone, intent, focus, and purpose of the material being explained and presented. With close participation and oversight from Imam al-ʿĀṣī himself, I have tried to make the material flow from one idea to another with a minimum of distractions for the reader. In achieving this objective, I had to make some important choices before embarking on the major subject of editing this volume. From a mechanical point of view, these choices are related to enhancing *readability* so that the reader is engaged by the subject matter, unhindered by cosmetic distractions. They are related to the use and application of honorifics, the font chosen for the typography, the use of endnotes as opposed to footnotes, and transliteration conventions.

Honorifics are the words expressed by every Muslim when the name of Allah (ﷻ), the name of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the names of others of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ) are mentioned, spoken, or written. These are seen in parentheses after the name of each of the above is expressed. The glossary gives a meaning for each of these short Arabic phrases that are composed in a pleasing calligraphy. These are known to nearly every Muslim; however as this is an English *tafsir*

with a large English speaking audience who may have little experience with this kind of Islamic etiquette, it became necessary to communicate what these mean. As the name of Allah (ﷻ) is mentioned in several ways — He, the One, God, the All-Knowing, the Mercy-Giving, etc. — the honorific is placed only and specifically after the word *Allah* is used. This choice was made simply so that the reader is not inundated with these after every mention of the Most High; however it should be understood that when Allah's (ﷻ) name is mentioned in whatever respectable fashion, He is deserving of this honor and praise. Similarly whenever the words *Prophet*, *Messenger*, *Apostle*, *Muhammad*, *Moses*, *Jesus*, etc. are cited by name, the honorific is applied. The reader will not see an honorific when these Prophets (ﷺ) are cited in the third person. However, once again, it should be understood that whenever these names are mentioned, these words are to be spoken simultaneously so as to express the proper reverence for these greatest of all human beings.

As there are perhaps hundreds of honorifics applied to each set of pages in this first volume of *The Ascendant Qur'an*, a script had to be composed so that they could be applied automatically and appropriately after each affected name. This script shall be made available freely to anyone who is engaged in similar activity. Perhaps it can be improved with further use, and also made useful across other applications and platforms.

The font chosen for this *tafsir* is one form of *Goudy*, suitably adjusted to accommodate the Arabic characters which are not part of the English language. As a typographer by trade, I find this to be a good choice because its x-heights are nicely balanced with its ascenders and descenders so that the dashes and dots required for the extra Arabic characters do not appear to be cumbersome for the reader. Second, the bold and italic variations of the font are not so different from the base typeface, so as to distract the reader from the body of the more pivotal subject matter. Given that one will encounter numerous instances of bold and italic type mixed in with the regular type, as this kind of work demands, it was necessary to make such a choice.

On a personal note, I have always found footnotes at the bottom of the page to be intriguing, and thereby distracting from the

point that is being communicated. Nonetheless, the information contained therein greatly enhances the reading experience, while also providing confidence for the reader that everything cited is well documented, researched and explained. This is why I chose to use endnotes as opposed to footnotes peppered throughout the body of the text; I believe a growing number of publishers are making this choice. In future editions of this first volume, the endnotes will, *inshā'allāh*, be more thorough along with a robust bibliography.

Lastly, the transliteration of the Arabic words, whenever necessary, is done according to the rules of the Library of Congress, which can easily be downloaded off the web. The style sheets applied to the typography are those used by the IIIT (The International Institute of Islamic Thought). As such, all the Qur'anic *āyāt* that are directly quoted will be written in bold type; all the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) will be written in italics; and all original Arabic words, except for proper nouns, will similarly be written in italics. Some words that are already part of the English language like imam, fatwa, jihad, and hadith will neither be italicized nor have the transliteration rules applied. Other proper nouns like Sunnah, Makkah, Madinah, Allah (ﷻ) and Muhammad (ﷺ) will similarly not be italicized or transliterated as they are already in common usage in English. As far as the name *Muhammad*, what is mentioned above will only apply to the Prophet (ﷺ), not to other men who also have the name Muḥammad; in this latter case, the transliteration rules will be applied. In the case of other Arabic proper nouns that are not part of the natural English lexicon, transliteration rules will be applied, but not italics.

Finally, the inspiration for the title, *The Ascendant Qur'an*, comes from the following *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Tawbah*,

If you do not succor the Apostle, then [know that Allah will do so, just as] Allah succored him at the time when those who were bent on denying the truth drove him away, [and he was but] one of two; when these two were [hiding] in the cave, [and] the Apostle said to his companion, “Grieve not, truly, Allah is with

us.” And thereupon Allah bestowed upon him from on high His [gift of] inner peace, and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas the cause of Allah remained supreme: for Allah is Almighty, Wise (9:40).

As this *tafsīr* departs from other *tafsīr* literature, the title based on this *āyah* seemed a natural choice. And the major theme here is on Allah’s (ﷻ) power. Allah (ﷻ) is the Most Merciful, but at the same time, He is also the Most Powerful. Has anyone ever accused Allah (ﷻ) of abusing His massive power? Would it not make sense for those who have earthly power, but no mercy, to align themselves to the divine power culture?

As always, this editor, in the performance of his work, wishes for your health, happiness and an enriching reading experience in this first volume of *The Ascendant Qur’an*. He also wishes for Allah’s (ﷻ) satisfaction with his effort and the *du‘ā* of those who are satisfied with Allah (ﷻ) in return, *wassalām*,

‘Afif Aḥmad Khān

11 Rabi‘ al-Thānī 1429AH

Transliteration Chart

Consonants

أ	none (initial)	ض	ḍ
ؤ	' (medial or final)	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	ة	ḥ
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

اَ	a	آ	ā	أَی	á
أُ	u	آ	ā	أَی	ay
إِ	i	أُو	ū	أَو	aw
		إِی	ī		

Tanwīn and Tashdīd

اَنَّ	an	أَيَّ	ayy	أَوَّ	aww
أَنَّی	an	أُوَّ	ūw	فَّ	ff
أُنَّ	un	أَيَّی	īy (medial)	شَّش	shsh
إِنَّ	in	أَيَّی	ī (final)	رَّ	rr

Mufassir's Preface¹

Writing these few words to answer the question of “why another *tafsir*¹ is necessary” offers a welcome diversion from the more intensive work of the *tafsir* itself. With all my limited human potential still deficient in accommodating the ever-giving Qur'an's depth and range, this Qur'an and its meanings has had me in a state of mental alert. The first thing that must be said is that there are important prerequisites for any attempt at delivering the original Qur'anic and Arabic meaning and understanding into the English language.

That most essential element is a “direct” intimacy with the words, wording, substance, and subject matter distributed throughout the 114 *sūrah*s of this ever so communicative Qur'an. This ingredient by Allah's (ﷻ) grace and care we strongly but humbly assert.

The other significant component for the task of writing a *tafsir* is to be in command of the target language — in this case, English. And that, too, we strongly but humbly assert. Having said that, it must be emphasized that undertaking the responsibility of a *tafsir* is not a simple venture. It requires a grounding in many social sciences and disciplines; add to that the necessity of being versed in

where the public mind stands when it comes to the social trends and theories of the time. As the reader will discover, and as I have discovered, this Qur'an goes to the limits of the heavens and the depths of life on earth; it takes us to the horizons and back; it travels into ancient times and speaks about future times; it informs us of living and intelligent beings besides us humans; it places us in this physical world but it also moves us into the coming world of the afterlife. This Qur'an speaks with authority on all these affairs because it issues from the Creator, the Almighty, and the Most Knowledgeable on all these matters. Nonetheless, even in all this vastness, here I am, a little and virtually insignificant human being, trying my best to pass on some of the "scoops" or undeveloped meanings embedded in this eternal Qur'an. These meanings are just waiting for you and me to unearth. I have to say, frankly and fraternally, that as my mind was sweating to understand and explain these unceasing meanings, my soul was soothed at each turn of the page along this journey of *tafsīr*.

For those who are already familiar with the Qur'anic content, the following statements may be overstating the obvious; however for those who are only now approaching the Qur'an, this is a necessary clarification. Everyone has to understand that this Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) revealed word and disclosed meaning; **He** is the Sustainer of life and the **One** whose word is accurate and final. But as for us human beings on earth with all our deficiencies, limitations, and failures, we can only try our best to grasp whatever we can of **His** scriptural diction. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received this garden of meanings and was the best human being to tend to it. His was a pure heart, a clear mind, and a compassionate attachment to the Almighty, placing him ahead of us in transcribing these lofty and heavenly meanings into the lives of ordinary men. From their moments of seclusion to their days of public expression, these meanings have all been compiled and preserved for all times in Allah's final communication to humanity: the Qur'an.

This Qur'an by its own words is *nūr* and *hudá* (light and guidance). And the switch to that light and the vehicle to that guidance is our apprehension, our thinking, and our reasoning. Let it be

known that this Qur'an is as strongly *for* the happiness of humanity as it is vehemently *against* the causes of misery and affliction.

For those who are unfamiliar with the language of the Qur'an, let me say to you that its *balāghah* (fluency) is unsurpassed. Let me also tell you that its grammar is unmatched. Perhaps, with Allah's (ﷻ) permission, there will be time in future works to explain the intellectual frame of reference for the basic linguistic units into which this Scripture is cast. Also within this Qur'an are some lessons and *sūrah*s cast in a story format.

In the *tafsīr* literature one encounters some statements or ideas that are called *Isrā'iliyāt*. These are sometimes opinions and sometimes beliefs that originate neither in the Qur'an nor in the Sunnah, yet have found their way into *tafsīr* literature, especially when the discourse of the Qur'an is construed by some to be historical or "biblical." There is also a component of the Qur'an called *gharīb al-Qur'ān*. This refers to words and meanings that appear to be "strange" — based on the meaning of the word *gharīb*.

Then there are some *āyāt* in the Qur'an that have a moral content and message, and there are *āyāt* that have a legal content. Some *āyāt* speak directly to the individual; while others speak to the society. Some interpreters of the meanings of the Qur'an dwell on some of these areas and less on others.

Further, throughout the 14 centuries of human interaction with this generous Qur'an some people like to live in and live out the emotional and self-fulfilling meanings of this divine Writ. Many of these are Sufis and those who are looking for a strictly individual sense of fulfillment. Not far afield from the Sufis are the esoteric types who have gone looking for concealed, confidential, cryptic, or clandestine meanings hiding in the *āyāt*. Of course any well-grounded committed Muslim with direct access to the Qur'an can identify those who have "gone off the deep end" when trying to understand or explain the divine Script.

This *mufassir* does not contend that he has a perfectly rounded knowledge of the Qur'an. But he has enough knowledge to assert that this Qur'an is a well-balanced and coordinated set of meanings that do not leave room for exaggerations or wild extrapolations.

There are requisite ingredients that come together to produce a mature understanding and a formulated meaning of one particular *āyah* or all of the *āyāt* of the Qur'an put together.

There is an ambiance that belongs to the *balāghah* of this Qur'an, there is a structure that belongs to the grammar of this Qur'an, and there is a field of common sense that accommodates the understanding and interpretation of its timely and timeless meanings. This everyone should understand beyond a doubt.

Of course, there will be those who will say there is no need to have another *tafsīr*. These we will not bother to answer in any detail because it is almost like saying we need no one to think about what Allah (ﷻ) is telling us within the particular circumstances and conditions we find ourselves in. Or we need no one to explain Allah's (ﷻ) words as they comment on the ever changing conditions of a developing world that impact human nature in every generation of every place. The more that time elapses after the revelation of this Qur'an in Makkah 1,400 years ago, the more thoughts are needed to germinate and spread out its meanings.

For those who are fiqh specific, fiqh centered, and fiqh limited, they should know that fiqh is the least component of this plentiful and prolific Qur'an. We pray for the day when the Muslim public mind can adapt and oblige the larger social scope of this Qur'an to finally formulate the grand fiqh of all: the fiqh of justice.

The Qur'an if we would only understand its meanings becomes either evidence for you or evidence against you. But if justice does not glaringly shine out through the lessons and discourses of the Qur'an, then we will have nothing more than a superficial understanding of its contents.

The Qur'an speaks to people. *Yā ayyuhā al-nās!* O people! Therefore, the Qur'an is meant for everyone. It does not matter whether one is a scholar or a novice; the Qur'an is speaking to each one of us. And if someone is speaking to us, why should we not listen? And if we *are* listening, we must understand what we can. Remember, the Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) words and they are meant for everyone.

One important aspect of *tafsir* is to understand the words of the Qur'an within the context they were revealed in. Further, one should try to understand the generic sense of the word, and the linguistic component of the word, independent of its *shar'ī* accretion.

Another important aspect of *tafsir* is to travel with the Qur'anic word within the Qur'an itself. The word and its meaning have a "cultural" and "historical" dimension — and they also have a contextualized Qur'anic dimension. It is said among the people of *tafsir* that some parts of the Qur'an explain other parts: *al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'duhu ba'dan*.

Yet another important factor in accessing the meanings of the Qur'an is to critically understand the history of man: social, political, cross-cultural, international, the history of civilizations, and many other aspects of history. However, we refer here not to a simple-minded imbibing of a chronicle written by conquerors and emperors who projected themselves prominently or simply settled scores in their writings. We allude instead to an analytical approach to history favoring those who follow the divine Writ so that they can make sense out of man's recorded history without falling for its propaganda.

To understand and appreciate the meanings of the Qur'an people should be familiar with the *jāhiliyāh* (the ignocracy), ancient and contemporary. It may be helpful to recall what 'Umar said, "The structure of Islam will come undone one increment at a time when there are people who grow up in Islam but are not cognizant of the *jāhiliyāh*."²

Another essential body of knowledge required for the *tafsir* of the Glorious Qur'an is the knowledge of the Prophet's (ﷺ) *Sīrah*, along with the lifestyles and the lifetime of that first generation of Muslims devoted to him. It should be noted that the first attempt at *tafsir* was during the third century after the Hijrah. At that time because of the worldwide spread of Islam and the dynamics of different language groups and cultures "melting" into the Islamic composition, there arose a need for explaining the meanings of this Qur'an.

An *āyah* in the Qur'an that points to the virtue of *tafsīr* may be, “And We brought down to you [Muhammad] the *dhikr* [consciousness of this Qur'an] to show people through evidence what has been revealed [or brought down] to them” (16:44). The Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) elaborate *hujjah* to all mankind.

For those who are new to this area of *tafsīr*, we would like to draw their attention to the large variety of *tafsīrs* in circulation. There are *fiqhī tafsīrs* of the Qur'an. This type of *tafsīr* tries to condense an expansive Qur'an into the conditional and cautious area of *fiqh* and the methodology of the *faqīhs*. This type of *tafsīr* has an emphasis on legalistic matters. Another type of *tafsīr* is the rational *tafsīr*; notable here is *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by al-Rāzī. Then there is the type of *tafsīr* that relies on the elaborate construct of the language; this school of *tafsīr* is called *al-tafsīr al-bayānī*. Notable ones in this category are the *tafsīrs* of al-Zamakhsharī, Abu al-Su'ūd, and al-Baydāwī. And there are other varieties that have a philosophical approach such as *Tafsīr al-Mizān* by al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, and a Sufi approach such as *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* by al-Qushayrī.

We hope and pray that this *tafsīr* will be a contribution to our Islamic library for generations to come. But more importantly we hope and pray to Allah (ﷻ) that this *tafsīr* will instill the *nūr* of Allah (ﷻ) in the hearts of the Islamic generation on the horizon. Their time has come — to bring justice back to a humanity that is teetering on the edge of an abyss.

This *tafsīr* captures events and personalities in our time frame. These events and personalities will have lapsed in the coming decade or two. But the frame of reference employed throughout this *tafsīr* should be identified by all intelligent, struggling Muslims and non-Muslims who would mitigate corruption, stop traitors, punish the criminals, and arrest the worldwide capitulation to imperialists and Zionists.

In this *tafsīr* you will come across 20th-century personalities. Of course, the Qur'an predates them; but the Qur'an anticipated their movements and their social behavior and it captured their criminal description, recording it for all of us. If we mention a certain king, political figure, ambassador, or other officials and deci-

sion-makers we know the Qur'an, revealed in Arabia 14 centuries ago, was not aimed at simply spotlighting their persona; rather it was revealed to identify their behavior centuries before they were born. And now that they are born and wreaking havoc on our societies we only need to unlock these Qur'anic definitions and identify these war criminals and financial thieves — the plunderers of humanity. Then we can get on with the task of correcting history at a time when history is about to implode.

This humble work is not intended to be a *tafsir* in the usual sense of the word. It will be, *inshā'allāh*, an analysis of the meanings of the Qur'an. We ask Allah (ﷻ) to help us understand His Book in the light of today's realities. And we ask Allah (ﷻ) to give us all the strength and stamina to present these sublime meanings so that our perception of the Qur'an, Allah's (ﷻ) chosen words, becomes relevant and not remote; practical, not theoretical; social, not cultural; dynamic, not static; and a source of truth, morality, ethical commitment, and divine salvation in a world of make-believe, vice, and anarchy.

The subject of Allah (ﷻ) who put these words together is in need of your sincere *du'ā'* to finish this struggle in the world of ideas — a struggle that is accompanied by one in the field. Only through this joint type of struggle will Allah's (ﷻ) word not be demeaned by the petty man-made masters who are currently the world's overlords. Finally, as we endeavor to relate the meanings of the Qur'an, we acknowledge that we are only human. We are subject to mistakes. For that we seek Allah's (ﷻ) forgiveness, and we hope that our sincerity and conscientious efforts will be supplemented by Allah's (ﷻ) necessary grace and mercy. *Āmīn*.

Keep **His** company, keep the faith, and keep well, *wa-al-salāmu 'alaykum wa rahmatu-allāhi wa barakātuh*.

Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Āṣī

The Washington, DC Metropolitan Area, USA

4 Rabī' al-Thānī 1429AH

Endnotes

- 1 A *tafsīr* is an explanation of the meanings of the Qur'an. The sources for the explanatory comments are the *āyāt* of the Qur'an themselves, the *āyāt* as explained by the Prophet (ﷺ), and the life of the Prophet (ﷺ). The author of the *tafsīr* is the *mufasssīr*. The word *mufasssīr* is preferable to the word *author*, because the use of the latter may be confused with the author of the Qur'an. Undoubtedly, the author of the Qur'an is Allah (ﷻ).
- 2 'Umar's statement in the original Arabic was, "*Innamā tunqaḍu 'urá al-islām 'urwatan 'urwatan, idhā nasha'a fī al-islām man la ya'rifu al-jāhiliyah.*" — from previous *tafsīrs*.

Introduction

The Centrality of Arabic in Understanding the Qur'an

The Qur'an is Allah's (ﷻ) revelation unto humanity in His own choice of words. Just like *al-Tawrah* and *al-Injil* (the Old and the New Testaments) were revealed in the twin semitic languages of Hebrew and Aramaic, the Qur'an was revealed in the semitic Arabic language. However, unlike the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, which became virtually extinct, the Arabic language — the language of the Qur'an — was nourished, and it has flourished since Allah (ﷻ) revealed the Qur'an to His last Prophet (ﷺ). A language that was confined to the tribes of the Arabian peninsula 1,400 years ago has since developed into the lingua franca of peoples from the extremities of Asia to the farthest corners of Africa.

“Behold, We have bestowed it from on high as an Arabic Qur'an [discourse] so that you may discipline your reasoning,” Allah (ﷻ) says in the noble Book (12:02). Yet, understanding the Qur'an, even at the most elemental of its many levels, has been a challenge for generations of Muslims throughout the ages. Some non-Arabic speaking Muslims have addressed this challenge by translating the text of the Arabic Qur'an into their native languages. But still, despite the best efforts of translators, there will

never be a true substitute for learning, understanding, and communicating with the Qur'an, Allah's (ﷻ) final book unto humanity, in its own medium, the Arabic language. This in an issue on which there is no disagreement,¹ and on which there can be no expectation of compromise. This is why Muslims throughout the world identify with the Qur'an in its own language. They render their *ṣalāh* not in whichever language they may be most familiar, or in which they feel most comfortable, but rather in the language in which Allah (ﷻ) has chosen to deliver His lucid and wise *āyāt* to us, **“Thus, then, have We bestowed from on high this [divine writ] as an ordinance in the Arabic tongue” (13:37).**

For many Muslims, however, translations are essential vehicles through which they must try to understand the divine meanings of the original Arabic Qur'an. Notwithstanding the genuine needs of non-Arabic speakers, the translation process presents a serious problem, especially when people attempt to use the English language as the receptacle of the Qur'anic message. This is not to imply that the Arabic-speaking people encounter no challenges or difficulties as they read the Qur'an in their mother tongue — they certainly do. Indeed, a learned and well-read Muslim who reads the meanings of the Qur'an in English (or any other non-Arabic language) may certainly acquire a clearer understanding of the message in these *āyāt* than a less learned Arabian reading the Qur'an in its original language. Nonetheless the problems of translation are very real, and having taken on the task of attempting to elucidate the divine meanings of the Qur'anic *āyāt* in the earthly, secular language of English, this writer needs to identify some important considerations for the reader to bear in mind.

For example, one of the miracles of the Qur'an is that its *āyāt* are charged with multiple layers of divine meaning, many of which cannot be fully conveyed even approximately by a simple translation into another language. There are also *āyāt* whose meanings cannot be grasped by the human mind until its historical experience has ascended to a certain level of knowledge and maturity. In other cases, the meanings of words or expressions used in the Qur'an may be *relative* or dependent on their context. The Arabic

word *al-khayl* is an example of one such word. Literally, the term designates any item, the possession of which induces a human feeling of glory and pride. Thus when the Qur'anic discourse employs the word *al-khayl*, Allah (ﷻ) is alluding to those things whose ownership becomes an object of class differentiation and status symbolism. The Qur'an is referring less to the value of the possessions themselves, but more to the human interaction with them. At the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the revelation of the Qur'an, one such item was a pedigreed horse. Because of this, the term became associated with horses in general, burying the original intent and purpose of the Qur'anic use of the term. In today's world, *al-khayl* may signify a hand-crafted automobile, a Learjet, a yacht, choice real estate in the heart of an expensive city, a mansion on a lake, custom-made jewelry, designer outfits, or stocks in a well-known, profit-generating corporation. Generally, the ownership of these things is referred to "higher" classes of privilege and power. Or, in other words, the only ones who can afford to purchase and maintain these "things" are those who have the wherewithal to do so as well as the associated "pride of ownership." This is what needs to be understood when one encounters the word, *al-khayl*. Hence, and particularly in all these cases, crucial divine meanings must necessarily be lost when the text of the Qur'an is translated into another language.

The first challenge in analyzing and understanding the meanings of the Qur'an is to select the English word that comes closest to delivering the full meaning of the original Arabic word. Even those who are well-versed in both English and Arabic find this very difficult. In some cases, it may be possible to choose an English word that comfortably conveys the meaning. At other times it may be impossible to find a word that falls within the requisite degree of accuracy, and thus it may be necessary to qualify the translation with explanations of the full meaning of the Arabic original. In still other cases, it may be imperative to use different English translations of the same Arabic word, even in the same *āyah*, to convey its multiple meanings. And in a few cases, using the original Qur'anic Arabic word, with an explanation of its meaning, would be simply

unavoidable, in order to ensure that its authentic meaning and significance is not mutilated or otherwise misrepresented. What many Muslims who have been immersed in the Western intellectual tradition, rather than being shaped by Islam and the Qur'anic tradition, fail to realize is that the Qur'an itself expresses a profoundly unique worldview and system of thought, which is deeply reflected in the language it uses and the resonant meanings with which it endows that language.

Another, and perhaps far greater, problem is that many Qur'anic words cannot fit into English; or, to put it another way, English is simply unable to accommodate many Qur'anic terms and concepts. Modern English as we know it today is the product of a historical and cultural process totally alien to Islam. This refers to the ugly and profoundly damaging conflicts over religion and the role of clergy since the Middle Ages that split the Western world into separate and often hostile camps: the religious and the secular. In the process, not only was the Church expelled from the decision-making framework but religious idiom driven out of mainstream discourse. Not only was Church separated from State but so was the language associated with both these institutions. The developmental course of modern English has been shaped by the need to express the values and assumptions of this dominant, secular, anti-religious Western discourse, and hence it is particularly ill-suited for the expression of Qur'anic meanings. Many terms of everyday use in contemporary English are imbued with values and deeper meanings reflecting this Western worldview.

Many Muslims consider that the language of Western religiosity may be better suited for expressing the meanings of the Qur'an. But when the Church was humbled into seclusion and alienation, so was the language of the Church and the Christian clergy. The result is that sets of words and expressions are either disconnected from value content, or saturated with meanings totally alien to Qur'anic discourse. Some such words are *believer*, *disbeliever*, *atheist*, *polytheist*, *agnostic*, *heathen*, *infidel*, *heretic*, *non-believer*, *idolater*, *pagan*, *apostate*, and so on. These words do not relate to the characterization of the value-worth of human beings. To put it more pre-

cisely, what is the ethical or the labor value of a person who is an agnostic, for example, in this description of man? Besides, as far as the Western thought-processes go, what is the implication of being an atheist, an agnostic or a believer? As far as can be concluded from the Western man's use of his language, there is no particular merit or demerit in being any of them.

It is extremely important to bear this in mind as the Western mind and its languages are surveyed for appropriate words or terms capable of doing justice to the translation of the Qur'anic lexicon. Because of this mental schism in the Western languages, words that simply translate key concepts of the Qur'an cannot be found.

For this reason, the word *Allah* in the Qur'an cannot be directly translated as *God*. God in the Western definition is a deity, the Supreme Being, the eternal and infinite Spirit, the first Cause; all of which reflect the deification of human attributes. Greek and Nordic mythologies along with their associated pantheon of gods are familiar to all English speakers. These gods are known to display superhuman capabilities such as giving and withdrawing, blessing and punishing, etc.; however, they are also diminished by "human" frailties such as jealousy, infidelity, envy, malice and opportunism. Nonetheless, certain progenitorial and legendary "superhumans," who assume the shape and form of a particular race of people, are regarded to "possess" supernatural abilities. Man, naturally, is the center of this universe. To bring this mental disposition into the present, many Americans carry the erroneous impression that the United States "feeds" the rest of the world; or in certain academic circles and deliberative assemblies, the members grapple with the thought of whether America (an aggregate of people ostensibly bound by a constitution) should or should not be the "policeman" (security enforcer) of the world. Once again, the ability to feed and the ability to secure are "possessed" by certain human beings and not by others. So when these humans spuriously award themselves "providing" abilities, those other humans on the receiving end often wind up fearing the withdrawal of these provisions. By modifying their behavior to escape instability and insecurity, the recipient humans come to "deify" the providing humans. This is what is meant by the deification of human attributes.

However, never in any Western tradition do we encounter a concept of God as the sole and ultimate Authority. When God is without authority, He ceases to be the Allah (ﷻ) of the Islamic vocabulary. And yet, it is impossible to wholly avoid the use of God; and it must be stated, and the reader must bear in mind, that the usage of the word *God* is intended to convey the full meaning of the word *Allah*, rather than the Western meaning of the word *God*. And to understand the full meaning of the word *Allah* the reader must, as far as is possible without direct access to the true Arabic original, look to the Qur'an itself.

Such is also the case with the words *believer* or *non-believer*. Neither of these words has, in their Western usage, any value; for they are cut-off from the active and the practical exercise of free will, freedom of choice, and the consequences thereof. To translate *mu'min* simply as *believer* or *kāfir* as *non-believer* is tantamount to secularizing the meanings of the Qur'an. The same is also true for numerous other Qur'anic Arabic words: *mushrik*, *muttaqi*, and *Shayṭan*, for example. These words cannot simply be translated as *polytheist*, *pious*, and *satan*, respectively. Can *mushrik* be understood without reference to *shirk*? ... *muttaqi* without reference to *taqwá*? ... or *Shayṭan* without reference to the Islamic understanding of the history of *Iblīs*? Doing so is to effectively discard the complementary and interdependent conceptual, practical, religious, political, immediate and profound meanings. And yet the use of the English terms may at times be unavoidable; in which case it must be borne in mind that they are intended to express the full Qur'anic meanings of the Arabic originals, rather than their limited and limiting, distorted and distorting, English meanings.

We, the Muslims, have before us a formidable and unenviable task: to reintegrate the religious with the political, the worldly with the other-worldly, the spiritual with the physical, and the heavenly with the earthly. We will not be able to achieve our objective if our words and concepts are imbued with notions of secular and mundane dichotomies impinging on our understanding of Islam, and if they are distorted by the language used to access the meanings of Divine revelation.

Let us also understand that the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'an, is still vibrant with its purpose of being the repository of revelation and scripture. It is the Arabian human, like all other human beings, who has been affected by the discourse of Western civilization. As the Arab countenance has gradually donned the spectacles of Western civilization, it has regressed away from the stand of Allah's (ﷻ) noble book. Not only did colonialists and invaders through the ages manage to displace Islamic peoples from Andalusia, Palestine and the Balkans, among so many other places, but the sinister and subtle influence of their values and ideas displaced and dislodged the true meanings of the Qur'an.

What is more, this is a trap that has ensnared even those who should have been the most natural guardians of the Qur'an: the Arabs, the only people with immediate access to the Divine Revelation in its original form. Unfortunately, through the course of time, and as a result of the natural influence of a "higher culture" dominating over perceived "lower cultures," Qur'anic words and meanings have assumed a Western slant, even in the minds of many Muslims for whom Arabic is their first (and possibly only) language. Thus it cannot be assumed that an Arab has any greater insight into the meanings of the Qur'an than a Malay-, Urdu-, Persian- or Turkish-speaking Muslim who identifies with the Qur'an and tries to assimilate into it. In this, as in every other area of life, such ethnic and racial definitions — beloved by the modern West — are alien and irrelevant to Islam and Muslims.

It should be said, however, that despite the deficiencies of many Arabs, it is to their credit that in the face of a worldwide assault against their Qur'anic culture, they still offer the linguistic climate that has the potential of fostering the Qur'anic and Apostolic generation which human destiny awaits. Despite the reality of today's civilizational struggles, Muslims know that Allah (ﷻ) will not slight them as they complement the physical war with a mental war that will in due course bear the fruits of an Islamic civilization — proud of the Qur'an, proud of its *imān* and proud of its independence and freedom from all vestiges of *kufr*, *inshā'allāh*.

Endnotes

- 1 Represents a consensus of intra-Islamic scholarly opinion. This is inclusive of all political (Sunnīs, Shī'īs, Zaidis, Ibāḍīs, etc.), jurisprudential (Ḥanafīs, Shāfi'īs, Ja'farīs, Zaidis, etc.) and conceptual (Qadarīs, Murji'aḥ, Mu'tazilīs, etc.) Islamic schools of thought.

1

Sūrah al-Fātiḥah The Foundation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ
نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ
عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

- In the Name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.
- All praise is due to Allah [alone] the Sustainer of all the worlds,
- the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
- Lord of the Day of Judgement!
- You alone do we conform to; and unto You alone do we turn for help.
- Guide us to the straight [and direct] way

- **The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by You], nor of those who go astray! (al-Fātiḥah:1–7).**

This *sūrah*,¹ the opening chapter of the sacred Qur'an, is the central pillar of *ṣalāh* (affinity and affiliation with Allah (ﷻ)) for all Muslims. The Arabic word *ṣalāh* is preferable to the English word *prayer* because the latter does not denote mental and emotional attachment to Allah (ﷻ), as expressed through physical movements of the human body, that the Arabic word *ṣalāh* does. Inside today's dominant secular culture, various genres of prayer enable one to be "spiritual" without being mentally invested in God; however, there are few physical activities which do not require varying degrees of mental intensity and involvement (for example, hitting a baseball with a bat, working on an assembly line, or operating a forklift). Hence, the physical motions of the *ṣalāh* drive forth psychological acceptance of and cognitive attentiveness to Allah (ﷻ). There are no divinely-inspired meanings in other religions that are expressed by such movements of the human body as the Islamic *rukū'* and *sujūd* (usually translated as genuflection and prostration). These are consciously and dutifully performed at regular intervals throughout the day during the post-maturity and pre-senility lives of committed Muslims.

The meanings of this *sūrah* thus circulate in the mind of every Muslim at least 17 times each day — eight times during the daylight hours and nine times during the night hours. For reasons that have not been explained to us, *al-Fātiḥah* is recited in silence during the *ṣalāhs* performed in the daylight hours (*Zuhr* and *'Aṣr*) while, in the hours of darkness (*Fajr*, *Maghrib* and *'Ishā'*), the *ṣalāh* is read out loud. Muslims worldwide, regardless of their mother tongue, read, recite, and repeat this *sūrah* in its original, divine form in the Arabic language. Thus it is that every Muslim in the world — Arab and non-Arab alike — expresses his affiliation with Allah (ﷻ) through the same language, chosen by Him for His final and perpetual Word, at the same times on each and every day.

What, then, does this *sūrah* mean to these billion-and-a-half Muslims? What should it mean? What is it that they — the poor

and the affluent, the young and the old, men and women, black and white, scholars and lay persons, those of generations past and those whose time is yet to come — are supposed to understand and express by its recitation? What touches their hearts, stimulates their minds and moves their bodies, individually or in congregation, in private or in public? How germane is it to their personal and communal lives? Does it initiate and sustain a relationship with the One and only Creator? And if so, what type of relationship is it? How does this basic *sūrah* open a clear and sound channel of communication with Allah (ﷻ), pertinent to human existence, life, stability and future?

“Al-ḥamdu lillah: All appreciation is due to Allah alone” (1:2). In simple words the statement means: Thank God, or thanks to God! But offering this recognition to Allah (ﷻ) is not done in the abstract. The flesh and blood human being who is reiterating this statement, actually drilling it in night and day, is doing so in a context of reality. There are immediate concerns and pressures that come to bear on all of us wherever we are in the thick and thin of life.

A Muslim individual who says *al-ḥamdu lillah* may be in a comfortable state, be affluent or wealthy, and physically powerful and healthy. Whatever his immediate condition, his repeated assertion of this opening sentence is designed to set aside any sense of superiority or self-importance for this quality of life and state of ease. Instead, by attributing it to Allah (ﷻ), he genuinely and wholeheartedly feels a sense of appreciation and humility for having been granted such a condition of abundance.

Conversely, a person saying *al-ḥamdu lillah* may be in less favorable circumstances or state of life — he may be poor, or in need, he may be powerless, or in ill-health. Whatever his immediate condition, his affirmation of the meaning of this opening sentence confirms that he does not feel any inferiority or self-anguish for this apparent state of hardship. Rather he acknowledges it as Allah’s (ﷻ) will and feels, genuinely and wholeheartedly, a sense of determination and responsibility for being located in trying times and places.

Equally significant is the collective condition to which this first sentence of each *ṣalāh* refers. The *sūrah* is cast in the plural, not singular. Notice that the following *āyāt* speak about *we* and *us*, not about *I* and *me*. So if a reciter of this initial sentence in *ṣalāh* belongs to a community which is in a state of plenty or in a state of need; if he belongs to a society which is lax or under pressure; if he belongs to an Ummah which is in a state of flux or recession, the words *al-ḥamdu lillah* serve to place these physical and material challenges in their proper context — the context of a supervisory power, an Absolute Being, a Higher Authority, and an Infinite Divinity: *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* (the Sustainer and Lord of the worlds).

We encounter Muslims who verbalize their *ṣalāh* reciting this *sūrah* but then walk around with inflated egos. Regrettably there are many who do not assimilate into the superb and divine meanings of the noble Qur’an. One observes them; they are rich as individuals but they belong to a poor community of Muslims or to an Ummah that is struggling to make ends meet. These types of individuals who repeat the Qur’anic *āyāt* that conflict with their “status” are at best schizophrenic and at worst hypocritical. One cannot thank Allah (ﷻ) when one withholds from those who are in need. There are Prophetic statements which suggest that Allah (ﷻ) is to be found among those who are poor.²

This is why the first sentence, *al-ḥamdu lillah* is followed by the second, *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*. Here, the conscious mind is immediately fixed on the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is the Sovereign of the worlds. The whole issue of consciousness, life, existence, feelings and thoughts is related to the Ruler of the worlds. Every time a Muslim repeats these words, Allah (ﷻ) takes him on a miniature journey of the worlds. No longer is he an earthly human confined to his own one-on-one relationship with Allah (ﷻ). No longer does this human limit his bottled-up experiences to this world alone.

He realizes by repeating this second sentence that Allah (ﷻ), to Whom he offers his appreciation and gratitude, is the overall Master and Controller of all the worlds, the noticeable as well as the unnoticeable, the microscopic and the telescopic. Allah (ﷻ) is the Manager of the worlds of the human beings; the worlds of each

individual in their psychological, physical and conscious dimensions; the worlds of angels and of jinns, of the unseen and the unknown; the worlds of ideas and ideologies, and of relative ignorance and relative knowledge; the worlds of the haves and the have-nots; the worlds of the masculine and the feminine; the worlds of the young and the old, the firm and the faint; the worlds of the past, present and future; the worlds of the land, the seas and the many and the multiple worlds that all belong to Allah (ﷻ). This second sentence is a divine gift unto man in as much as it recognizes the plurality of existence and being. How can any ego live in this universal recognition and diffusion?

What else is deemed appropriate to describe the Sustainer of the worlds? **“Al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm: The Mercy-Giving, the Merciful” (1:3)**. Only Allah (ﷻ) can give mercy; others can express it but they cannot actually give it to others. Hence only Allah (ﷻ) is *al-Raḥmān*. Most of the attributes of Allah (ﷻ), when devoid of the definite article *the*, become descriptions of man. Allah (ﷻ) has ninety-nine attributes that begin with *the*; for example, the Compassionate, the All-Knowing, the Almighty, the Forgiving, and so on. Many of these words can, without the definite article *the*, also be descriptions of man, but *al-Raḥmān, the Mercy-Giving*, remains an attribute of Allah (ﷻ), and Allah (ﷻ) alone, even if the definite article is omitted, because He is the only Mercy-Giver.

For the second time now, after the *bismillāh (Bismillāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm)*, the humble Muslim, in the presence of Allah (ﷻ) during the *ṣalāh*, repeats ***al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm***. This is to underscore the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is Benevolent. He is Compassionate, and He is Considerate, contrary to the creeping notion that “God must be cruel” to cause earthquakes, floods, natural disasters and to permit wars and bloodshed. Little does man who entertains these notions realize that Allah (ﷻ) cannot be judged by the immediacy of mortality or by the reactions of “human nature.” One must rest assured that Allah (ﷻ) is Kind; He is Generous, and He is Just.

This emphasis on mercy and grace cannot be overstated. Allah’s (ﷻ) civilization was meant to be one of mercy. This is

one of the most important features of Islamic civilization — the expression, administration and preservation of mercy. In Western civilization the expression of mercy is considered to be a weakness; in Islamic civilization the expression of mercy is considered to be strength.

Gentleness, tenderness and warmth have become rare in today's world. Power and exploitation are the hallmarks of today's "superior culture." When a Muslim repeats and believes in Allah's (ﷻ) grace and sympathy, he bypasses this culture that has swept the world from one end to the other.

"Māliki yawmi al-Dīn: The Possessor of the Day of Judgement" (1:4), or, in another *qirā'ah* (rendition), **"the Sovereign of the Day of Judgement."** This also redirects the Muslim from the self-centered and sometimes obsessive concern with owning things. It reminds him that the ultimate ownership is on the Day of Judgement. Who shall own that day? Who shall be in charge on that day? Allah (ﷻ). So possessing this or that in this world is transitory. What counts is the fact that Allah (ﷻ) shall be in possession of a day when everything counts, and when no one can claim any property or wealth.

All of this must be properly understood. Many Muslims repeat this *āyah* but how many actually understand its implications? When all of this is consciously absorbed and mentally grasped, the nouveau riche will no longer cling to their worldly possessions nor will the wealthy believe that properties and assets are theirs in perpetuity. When *dīn* is the order of the day, the merchants and traders will no longer fear that an "Islamic war" is draining their coffers, because Allah (ﷻ) is the real Owner.

"Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in: You do we conform unto and You do we ask for help" (1:5). Remember, even in *ṣalāh* by ourselves, the plural is verbalized. If one person is in *ṣalāh*, by himself, he still says *na'budu* and *nasta'in*. This selfless person stands before Allah (ﷻ) as an integral part of the larger body of Muslims in the world. He has expanded his horizon beyond his immediate world and unto the worlds; he consciously acknowledges the Grace of Allah (ﷻ), and the Sovereignty of Allah (ﷻ). He is no longer

confused, in a world with layers of confusion. He conforms neither unto the styles of Hollywood, nor unto the standards of “superpowers.” He is free of the fashions in vogue, the etiquette of people in power, and the empty souls who are looking for meaning to their lives. He conforms unto Allah (ﷻ), the Cherisher, the Exalted.

With these ideas and feelings, the free Muslim turns to Allah (ﷻ) for help. This is not an idle Muslim asking theoretical help! This is an active, committed and involved Muslim who knows that Islam’s enemies cannot be his supporters, nor do they have the ultimate weapon. And who knows that he has no other choice.

It is the peak of hypocrisy for Muslims to verbalize *iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta’in*, and then, when they need help, be it political, economic or military, they turn to the *mushriks* and the Yahūd. This pretentious pietism has been vividly demonstrated by the titular rulers in Arabia when, instead of asking for Allah’s (ﷻ) help, they sought it from the *shayṭanī* powers. This clearly demonstrates the conflict between what they say and what they do. They say “Allah! Allah!” when it suits them, for propaganda purposes and for the cameras, lest any Muslim doubt their professed faith, but in times of real need they shout, “Uncle Sam! Uncle Sam!”

When will the Muslims be able to say these words, *iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta’in* and place them in the context of today’s world? When will the Muslims awaken from their meaningless verbalization of Qur’anic words to a meaningful actualization of the Qur’anic *āyāt*?

To say in *ṣalāh* “we seek You alone for help” is a very serious statement. If we had rulers who were *actualizing ṣalāh* (*iqāmah al-ṣalāh*) we would have them translate these meanings into action. There is an oft-quoted hadith from the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) which relates that Muslims should not oppose the rulers as long as these rulers *actualize ṣalāh*, but it is self evident that these rulers do not actualize the meanings of *ṣalāh*, however keenly they may promote the ritual of *ṣalāh*. They have demonstrated their abandonment of the meanings of *ṣalāh* many, many times.

“*Ihdina al-ṣirāṭa al-mustaqīm: Guide us [on] the straight path*” (1:6). In the world of confusion that Godless people are in,

the straight path may be hard to find, or twisting and entangling paths may appear to some as straight. In our age and in our time, some self-styled Muslims have characterized socialism as the straight path. There are also some Muslims of convenience who argue that “the American way” is the straight path. The pax Americana has taken its toll on people who should know better. Moreover, there are *dā’īs* who want Muslims to believe that the American way is the benign extension of Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book). This is at a time when the Americans themselves are beginning to express frustrations with a system that has gone awry. Many Muslim “scholars” have the dollar and the riyal as blinkers and cannot see anything other than the American way. Some of these “scholars for dollars” have even said that the American constitution is Islamic!

That is why guidance to Allah’s (ﷻ) straight path is qualified. **“*Ṣirāt al-ladhīna an‘amta ‘alayhim, ghayri al-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim wa la al-dāllīn*: The path [or course] of those whom You have favored, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray” (1:7).** The process is so delicate that Allah (ﷻ) must be repeatedly entreated to guide us to His unswerving way. There have been so many impostors who try to fool people that it becomes ever more urgent to ask Allah (ﷻ) to guide us and to show us His path. Nationalists have tried to convince us that theirs is the way to Allah (ﷻ). There are Arab nationalists, Persian nationalists, Turkish nationalists and so on. Concurrently, sectarians have sought to persuade us that theirs is the way to Allah (ﷻ). There are Sunnī sectarians, Shi’ī sectarians, and all their numerous off-shoots and varieties. Every self-centered crop grows from generation to generation seeking to claim that theirs is the only way.

Sūrah al-Fātiḥah has identified the course that leads to Allah (ﷻ). It is an open invitation and an inclusive direction because it is Allah’s (ﷻ). The features of those who have incurred Allah’s (ﷻ) wrath will become evident as the forthcoming *sūrah*s of the Qur’an are elucidated. Similarly, as the many layers of Qur’anic meanings are uncovered, those who have gone astray will be identified, *inshā’allāh*.

Al-Fātiḥah and the Larger Social Milieu

What does this *sūrah* mean to the Muslim individual and to the Ummah collectively? How should the exposed Muslim interact with these meanings, recited several times each day, and how should the fortified Muslim relate with his Muslim brothers who have assimilated these key words and who in the process have become assimilated into them? How germane are these daily recurring meanings to the Muslim's personal and communal life? Do these *āyāt* originate or initiate a relationship with the ever-present Creator and Evolver of things? And if they do, what type of relationship (*ṣalāh*) is it? To start with, the *sūrah* itself is known as the *Fātiḥah*, meaning the commencement or inaugurator. Remember, the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There is no *ṣalāh* for he who does not recite the *Fātiḥah*."³ How does this basic *sūrah* enable delivery of vital information from Allah (ﷻ) that is pertinent to man's collective, communal and societal life, as well as his future and stability?

"Al-ḥamdu lillah: All appreciation and thanksgiving are due to Allah [unparalleled]." This opening sentence places the acknowledging Muslim in a natural position of honorable subordination to Allah (ﷻ), the source of existence. These words, once uttered, understood, and integrated into human behavior, should have a humbling effect upon the "prayer-rendering" Muslim as he admits that gratitude is Allah's (ﷻ) due. Whatever state of mind this Muslim is in before he integrates these heavenly words and meanings into his earthly emotions and thoughts, he is quickly brought to his senses, "I thank Allah (ﷻ) for whatever He has given or denied me; whatever I perceive as an addition to my life or whatever I consider lacking in my life are only human perceptions tempting me away from my subordinate and subservient status to Allah (ﷻ)."

Typically, when people consider notions of abundance and scarcity, they immediately think of wealth and power. The ideas generated by power and wealth have the effect of relocating the human psyche away from the happy medium of being Allah's (ﷻ) subordinate and His subject. There are those individuals who are puffed-up with the sense of owning, possessing, and having money

and power. *Al-ḥamdu lillah*, if recited with a conscience and a proper human-to-Allah (ﷻ) awareness deflates that haughty and cavalier notion.

Then there are those who are exhausted with the notion that they have no money or power. *Al-ḥamdu lillah*, properly understood and absorbed, lifts the spirits of these broken individuals. They know that they are in the company of other brothers who genuinely care. Care is a verbal and behavioral expression of the word *rahmah*, which is an attribute of Allah (ﷻ). *Rahmah* is reasserted in the *bismillāh* (or *tasmia*) that is said at the beginning of every *sūrah* apart from the ninth. It is also emphasized in the next sentence, which underscores the character of grace and affection.

With the reduction of the former, those who tend to think of themselves as the high and mighty, and the promotion of the latter, those who think of themselves as insignificant and nonessential, all humans oriented towards Allah (ﷻ) in this *ṣalāh* become psychologically equal and mutually dependent. The rich and the mighty, by stating *al-ḥamdu lillah*, acknowledge that wealth accrues to them by favor from Allah (ﷻ), and thereby, their status is not lofty after all. All the funds and finances, all the power and privileges at their disposal really belong to Allah (ﷻ). The poor and those in need, meanwhile, acknowledge that what they yearn, in the form of material comforts and possessions, is not in fact the gift of those who wield temporal, limited and qualified control over it.

Al-ḥamdu lillah, if understood as the Qur'an contextualizes it and as the Prophet (ﷺ) demonstrated it, would strip the "upper classes" of their social excesses, their economic schemes, their financial greed, their political manipulations, their military aggressions and their psychological arrogance. If *ṣalāh* instilled this quality, there would be no place for "class Muslims" who, once the *ṣalāh* is over, are the focus of attention and admiration just because they have power and wealth. Those who do not have power and wealth automatically acknowledge those who do. One encounters this frequently. Poor people run to shake hands and sometimes feel that they are privileged by just being in the company of so-and-so *ṣāhib*, *āgha*, *sayyid*, *bey*, *fandum*, *khawaja* and so on.

Al-ḥamdu lillah also disempowers the reactionary mode as it relates to the revenge attitude, the get-even mentality, the class, the gender, and the race consciousness of the underclasses. Their reactionary frame of reference exists physically only because it existed psychologically to begin with.

Al-ḥamdu lillah defuses social upheaval from both sides of the social reality. *Al-ḥamdu lillah* does not permit the well-to-do to become extremely rich and it does not permit the less-fortunate to take up arms and extract equality through bloodshed. But this can only be when the ranks of *ṣalāh* are made up of devout Muslims who when they say *al-ḥamdu lillah*, really mean it.

When the rich and the poor are assembled in the presence of Allah (ﷻ), and they hear the committed imam open each *ṣalāh* with *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, they blend all together into one social fabric where the rich become responsible for the poor. The Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have instructed,

[...when the human perception or assessment of things is positive, then say,] “Praise and thanks be to Allah, through Whose agency and abundance, virtue is achieved.”⁴

It is not attributable to self effort that a person — whosoever that person may be — is on the “prosperous” side of life; that prosperity was made possible only through the courtesy of Allah (ﷻ). Little does the contemporary Muslim, flushed with materialism, realize that if and when a wealthy Muslim says *al-ḥamdu lillah*, he should be suppressing his ego; at least 17 times a day he must chip away at it. Eventually, it is expected that wealthy Muslims become honest and truthful to this heavenly statement as they stand in obedience to Allah (ﷻ), as they worship and as they build this relationship otherwise referred to as *ṣalāh*.

Another hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) says,

[...when things are interpreted by humans as negative or detrimental then say,] “Praise and thanks are Allah’s, the only One worthy of thanks in adverse conditions.”⁵

This expression of thanks in adversity is a salient feature of an inferior man addressing a superior Sustainer. Notice that in this prophetic statement the vigilant servant of Allah (ﷺ) did not change the description of adverse circumstances. The recognition of difficulty is the first step towards doing something about it.

If personal circumstances or the overall conditions are difficult, even catastrophic, that does not mean that this rendering of thanks to Allah (ﷻ) is a sign of surrender to a particular misfortune, or a passive acceptance of circumstances. It simply implies that in the larger context of human development, our appreciation is owed to Allah (ﷻ), our Creator, Maker, Calculator and Sustainer who has assessed whatever weighs heavily upon our vulnerable human nature.

That is why the expression of gratitude is followed by **Rabb al-‘ālamīn — the Sustainer of all the worlds (spheres, realms, and domains)** — as if to say, “O man! Beware. Acknowledge and heed the fact that you, mortal human, live in one world. You can see only so far, you can hear only so much, and you can sense only with your five limited senses. You have all the privileged faculties that Allah (ﷻ) created for you but still you are a mere mortal. Much as Allah (ﷻ) has honored and privileged you, and raised your quality of being, yours is one world. But Allah (ﷻ) is Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds, going far beyond your range of time and space, duration and distance — worlds so fine and minute that they will remain undetectable by your most delicate, scientific and advanced instruments, and worlds so enormous that they will never be accessible by your finest technologies and discoveries.”

This all-encompassing statement of divine Grandeur, following the phrase *al-ḥamdu lillah*, further diminishes and reduces the ego in man. One begins to think, “Well, who am I to pass judgment on a certain mishap or plight when I do not have the whole picture in perspective? I simply do not have all the facts.”

There is also a social content to the word *worlds* in the *āyah*. When a disciplined Muslim repeats the phrase “Sustainer of all the worlds” tens of times each day, he also recognizes the ethnic, racial, cultural, and gender worlds or domains, among others. There is a

world of plants, and another of animals. These worlds or spheres existed in the past, they exist at this moment and they will continue to exist in the future.

Some events — floods, earthquakes, avalanches and so on — are undoubtedly tragic but the tragedy is in our immediate perception, through the agency of our “humanness.” But here in *ṣalāh*, we are communicating with Allah (ﷻ) and He is not human. It behooves us, then, in our restricted capacity but with our unrestricted potential, to admit our vulnerability and at the same time acknowledge Allah’s (ﷻ) superiority and His dominance.

Hence, immediately after appreciating Allah’s (ﷻ) universal scope, a Muslim discerns and contemplates an authentic sense of plurality. This witness to physical and social worlds and spheres is in itself an admission of a global as well as local plurality. Once again the ego recedes.

“Al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm: The Source of Mercy, the Merciful.” At this moment of a Muslim’s recession into insignificance in the “worlds,” when this puny human disappears in the massive scale of existence, his sudden need is for care and compassion; thus he takes refuge in Allah’s (ﷻ) qualities as “The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.” When man thinks at the universal level of existence and being, there can be no one or no thing within it that can offer him solace. No source of wealth or power can offer this. In a world contingent upon the unknown, man can only truly relax when he calls on the Beneficent, the Mercy-Giving. Man, despite his technological pride, industrial progress and scientific discoveries, is reduced to an infant in need of affection and loving care. When man cannot turn to his own kind for support and patronage; when man, compared to the awesome creation of Allah (ﷻ) shrinks and his true self cries out for salvation, like one desperate and longing to be saved, then he beseeches Allah (ﷻ) by His two most fundamental attributes: The Most Merciful, and Compassionate.

In another *āyah*, Allah (ﷻ) says, **“Your Sustainer has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy...” (6:54).** Do kings and presidents understand this? What about citizens and laymen?

[Allah] answered, “With My chastisement do I afflict whom I will — but My grace overspreads everything; and so I shall confer it on those who are conscious of Me, and [who] spend in charity, and who are committed to Our message...” (7:156).

Humans are in the habit of attributing mercy or clemency to an office, a department, or an agency of government. Many Muslim societies — creatures of their own cultures — have rendered kings and presidents as the “most gracious and the most merciful!”

Of course, any Muslim in his right mind would immediately and loudly proclaim that Allah (ﷻ) and only Allah (ﷻ) is the most Gracious, the most Merciful, but his cultural and social behavior contradicts his words, for recital of the *Fātiḥah* never diminishes his ego. When this power- and wealth-intoxicated persona issues his decree of amnesty, he, in effect, and at the deepest level of appreciation, receives accolades and platitudes, giving the impression that he, in fact, is the most gracious and merciful!

This is one area where the contemporary Muslim mind and behavior have not defeated the secular usurpation of divine attributes, even though it may in theory, in some cases, tenaciously advocate a pristine or puritanical form of *tawḥīd*. But in practice this *salafī tawḥīd* plays second fiddle to notions of “his majesty” and “his royal highness.” Stubbornly ignored by zealous advocates of “pure” *tawḥīd*, this *āyah*, ***al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm***, and this opening *sūrah* are at odds with such capricious allusions of power and agency to earthly masters. This point shall be elaborated as both the Qur’an and the Sunnah are engaged in the coming *sūrahs*, *inshā’allah*.

“Māliki yawmi al-Dīn: Lord of the Day of Judgement.” Having placed the human in his proper place and position in the context of the scope of Allah’s (ﷻ) absolute power, the *Fātiḥah* orients him to the Final Day in this *āyah*. When wealth and power are two components of possession, the Creator focuses man’s attention to the end of time when only one proprietor counts: Allah (ﷻ), the Owner and the Keeper of the *Day of Dīn*. What happens then to the other title and deed-holders, the other land-

lords and lords, other estate-owners and the landed gentry? They are nowhere to be seen.

The Qur'an frequently and without prior notice transfers our attention to the hereafter. Many times this is done in such a manner that the dividing line between the here and now and the there and then is blurred or erased. This spontaneous transition is a way of breaking down the barriers between the earthly immediacy and the impending reality of the life to come.

One of the features of the ego is that it is time-centered. It is difficult to build an ego when one is aware of his life in the context of universal existence extending over and beyond his life span. An egocentric person is one who is time-dependent. His ego thrives on putting down other humans who are likewise time-constricted. But when man redefines his existence in practical terms to exceed the worldly and the physical wear and tear of his body, he deprives the ego of its vital ingredient, **“A Day when wealth and clan are of no advantage, except for he who approaches Allah with a sound [and pure] heart” (26:89)**. No longer does the ego have anything to latch on to.

On this Day of Accountability there is nothing to own. In those years of earthly existence, man could claim that he owned such and such; but not on that Day of Reckoning. Imagine a human soul that possesses nothing; that in fact is man's state of nature. His control of land, property, money, possessions, wealth and power were contingent upon exclusion; because of his ego, man excluded other men from “his” money, “his” possessions, “his” power, “his” property and “his” land. And so, while this attitude translated into legalisms and laws under the spell of his ego, it became necessary, during his temporal corporeal existence, to remind him of the ultimate day, the Day of Reckoning.

“Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in: You alone do we conform to, and to You alone do we turn for aid.” By now the reciter of the *Fātiḥah* in his *ṣalāh* should have shed his ego; by now he should have the facts straight: man does not stand alone. By now he should consciously be aware that Allah (ﷻ) is the One who should mould and model human behavior. At this point, the heart confesses and the mind acknowledges, “You alone do we comply with.”

Where else can anyone go? It was the ego that disturbed this conformity and compliance, this *'ibādah*. After peeling away the layers of this ego in the first four *āyāt*, man is able to make contact with Allah (ﷻ), and Him alone. Thus the soul speaks out, "We need to be Your subjects; we need to be Your servants; we need to be Your subordinates; we need to be Your instruments." Thus the mind expresses, "We want to be Your subjects; we want to be Your servants; we want to be Your subordinates; we want to be Your instruments." But how can this be?

Notice that the *āyah* reads, "You alone do we conform to." After the journey of shedding the ego, Muslim individuals reemerge as part of a collective. Hence a Muslim individual, void of the ego, finds himself again in the presence of other Muslims. In other words, a Muslim disappears as an individual only to reappear as one of an assembly of people. That is why, even a Muslim who is performing *ṣalāh* by himself, repeats this *āyah* in the plural, "Unto You do we conform," and not as his single persona would have it, "Unto You do I conform."

This *āyah* is another definition of who a Muslim is. A European philosopher defined existence by saying, "I think, therefore I am."⁶ A Muslim, though, defines his existence effectively by saying "We conform unto Allah (ﷻ), therefore I exist."

The opposite is also true. When Muslims do not conform unto Allah (ﷻ), you and I, as individual Muslims, do not exist. How true this *āyah* is, especially these days. Muslims are suffering genocide almost everywhere, in the Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa. This is because, instead of submerging their individuality into their collective, the Muslims have been sinking their collective into their egos. In other words, Muslims are guilty of a psychological genocide against themselves and their own community.

One place where this fact is borne out is the Hajj. There, no one knows anyone else. The physical cloth of the *iḥrām* cloaks the egomaniacs who put on a show of piety and devotion. Yet when they return to their palaces and their mansions, they indulge their egos, and read the *Fātiḥah* for good measure! They perform their

rituals of self-gratification, while those unknowns who were running around the Ka‘bah and praying with genuine passion are herded off to their nation-state slaughterhouses, while all Muslims hypocritically repeat in Makkah and Madinah, “You alone do we conform to...”

Ṣalāh is a microcosm of the Hajj. The lines of *ṣalāh*-attendees at most *jumu‘ah ṣalāhs* are worlds apart. Or rather, they are individuals, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, who are egos apart. *Al-ḥamdu lillah* has not equalized or harmonized them in front of Allah (ﷻ); *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* has not made them conscious of the breadth and depth of existence; *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* has not woken them to Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy and their role in expressing this mercy mutually and universally; *Māliki yawmi al-Dīn* has not broken their pretensions in a world obsessed with materialism and an income-structured society with all its disparities.

“Iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta‘in: You alone do we conform to, and to You alone do we turn for aid.” The *we* in this *āyah* is displaced by the individual ego, a displacement that ranks alongside Banū Isrā’īl’s (the Children of Israel)⁷ occupation of Palestine and Āl Sa‘ūd’s (the Saudi family) occupation of Arabia. Then, if the collective “we” is interpreted as a Muslim country, it is found begging secular *mushriks* and *kuffār* for help and aid. If it is an Islamic “cartel” it is found begging for aid handouts or international “legality.” If it is an Islamic organization or association, it is found asking secular governments for help. If it is one or the other of the Islamic movements, it is busy concealing its secret dealings with the financial tycoons and the mega-bankers. Besides the abject poverty of ideas displayed by Islamic activists concerning this most critical and paramount *āyah*, **Iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta‘in**, their avoidance of its policy implications has become reminiscent of the character of Banū Isrā’īl as exposed in the Qur’an.

“Ihdina al-ṣirāṭa al-mustaqīm: Guide us [on] the straight and direct way.” When all of this mess pollutes the Muslim heart and disorients the Muslim mind, it is normal and natural to ask and plead with Allah (ﷻ) to guide us to the straight and orderly way. Guide *us*, for when *we* are guided, *I* am guided. But then there are

the spiritually intoxicated Muslims who want to develop their *nafs*. They call it *tarbiyah*; guidance to them is a personal affair. They sleep countless nights on their right side, on a mat, and brush their teeth with a *miswāk*. There is nothing wrong with that except that Muslims are told this is all that is required to discover the road to salvation: the straight way, *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*! Add to that four days, four weeks or four months of *khurūj*, a journey to a neighboring district or a faraway land for the purposes of *tabligh* (missionary activity); there is nothing wrong with that either, except that it, too, has become an escapist fad like many others: the end instead of the means. Had this been the Sunnah of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ), we would never have had *Badr*, *Uḥud*, *al-Aḥzāb*, *Mu'tah*, *Tabūk*⁸ and so on in his *Sirah*.⁹

There are many strains of digression within the Ummah; none of them are excluded from the fold of Islam. Further, the concern here is not to malign any sincere attempt at consolidating the Muslims but in this maze of Islamic crosscurrents, there is an absence of a systematic and consolidated understanding of *dīn*. The object here is to explain that once the dynamic meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah are activated so that they become pertinent to human activities, issues, and concerns, the direction of *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* would have been clarified to some extent.

“*Ṣirāt al-ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim, ghayri al-maghḍūbi 'alayhim wa la al-ḍāllīn*: The way of those upon whom You bestowed Your blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by You], nor of those who go astray.” There are pioneers who are breaking new ground in reconstituting the legacy of this Ummah. Muslims are reading *al-Fātiḥah* at war fronts, at the funerals of *mujāhids*,¹⁰ at underground meetings, and at the frontlines of jihad which has been reactivated as of late. This is an impressive contribution to bringing Muslims back into line with the ethos of *al-Fātiḥah*, to subduing the ego, to eliminating self-centeredness; and to purging Muslims' ranks of mercenaries and hypocrites. But the forces opposed to this *sūrah* and this Book are on the lookout for any unifying force that places the Muslims where they rationally and emotionally belong.

We beg Allah (ﷻ) to lead us to *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*. We will not zig-zag in our course of devotion and action. Therefore, *inshā'allāh* we will not incur His anger, nor shall we diverge away from this duo: the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ).

Fanatical Nitpicking and Dumbing Down Guidance

Having delved into the fertile meanings of each *āyah* above, we shall now look at some of the general historical information available about this central *sūrah*. We shall then comment on the types of issues that have disconnected the Muslims instead of joining them, as is meant by *ṣalāh*, the cornerstone of *dīn*. In the treasure of information pertaining to this *sūrah*, we will realize that the varying definitions, names, descriptions, and procedures pertinent to this *sūrah* were not meant to inflate anyone's ego, as much as they were meant to give our human reasoning its valid pursuit of the truth and its better judgement and conviction.

The *Fātiḥah* means the initiator or the originator. In simple terms, it is the key to both the *ṣalāh* and the Qur'an. Many scholars have referred to it as *Umm al-Kitāb* (the precursor of the Book).¹¹ It is also known as *al-Ḥamd* (gratitude and appreciation).¹² Several *sūrahs* of the Qur'an are referred to by their first word. Another of its designations is *al-Shifā'* (the cure or healing), as it is read to help heal those of failing health.¹³ One hadith says, "The *Fātiḥah* is a remedy for all venoms."¹⁴ It is also called *al-Ruqah* (the medicine).¹⁵ Another narration refers to the *Fātiḥah* as *Aṣaṣ al-Qur'an* (the Foundation of the Qur'an).¹⁶ It has also been referred to as *al-Wāqiyah* (the prevention).¹⁷ Yet another name is *al-Kafyah* (the consummate and fulfilling).¹⁸ The Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said that "*Umm al-Qur'an may substitute for other [āyāt], but other āyāt cannot substitute for it.*"¹⁹ It is also referred to as the *Sūrah* of *Ṣalāh*²⁰ and as *al-Kanz* (the treasure).²¹

Many of these names have, for one reason or another, dropped from the Muslim consciousness. The only two titles of this *sūrah* still commonly used are *al-Fātiḥah* and *al-Ḥamd*; resuscitating the others is a nascent process of reawakening the average Muslim. It would be

simplistic to suggest that only one name for this *sūrah* is needed for Muslims to be brought together; in other words, it is a matter of “dis-unity” to have a *sūrah* known by several names. Muslims should be proud of the fact that their minds and intellectual honesty preserved these designations of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*.

This *sūrah* is usually considered to be Makkan (that is to say, to have been revealed before the Hijrah). However, a thorough investigation of the literature shows that some sources list it among the Madinan *sūrahs*. This too could become a contentious issue among Muslims but is there any matter of *‘aqidah* involved regarding the time and place of the *sūrah*’s revelation? Obviously not; therefore, differences on this issue do not merit any controversy.

The consensus of Muslims is that this *sūrah* has seven *āyāt*. Further, there is also consensual agreement that the *isti‘ādhaḥ* (seeking Allah’s (ﷻ) refuge from Shayṭan), which is read by some before the *bismillah*, and the word *Āmīn*, which is vocalized by some at the end of the *sūrah* in the night prayers, are not integral parts of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*. Despite all the universal and self-denying meanings of this central *sūrah*, there are still Muslims who raise controversies over these points. Such attitudes expose and humiliate those who argue at whether or not a *ṣalāḥ* is valid if someone says or does not say *Āmīn*, which is generally not accepted to be a part of the *sūrah* in any case.

There is also the issue of whether someone should read the *sūrah* if he is praying in *jamā‘ah*, behind an imam, and if so, whether this reading of the *sūrah* should be silent or vocalised. This is another case on which there are divergent opinions, all scholarly, well thought out and valid. Despite these answers, which have been with us for over 14 centuries, some insist on imposing their personal opinions upon other Muslims ignoring the basic point that whatever most helps in conveying the *ṣalāḥ* to its optimum should be done. Such tragic situations arise when the “outward performance” of *ṣalāḥ* is used by Muslims of ostentatious and arrogant piety to question whether other Muslims’ mental or emotional attachment to Allah (ﷻ) during *ṣalāḥ* is valid or not! This writer well remembers an Annual Conference of the Muslim Students’ Association in

the United States at which his presentation concentrated on valid plurality within Islam. One listener said during the question-and-answer session that the meeting of the general Muslim public on a common platform for a common purpose is not possible because some Muslims have done irreparable damage to Islam. Asked to be more specific, he cited the saying of *Āmīn* at the end of the *Fātiḥah* as an example of such a breach of Islam! Such attitudes defy belief considering the magnitude of the dangers that Muslims around the world share.

Allah (ﷻ) says in the last *āyah* of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, “**Guide us to the straight and direct way, the way of those [on whom] You have bestowed Your blessings and those who are not deviant.**” And who said that this straightforward path does not have many lanes? If the Muslims were to expand their parochial minds a little, they would see Allah’s (ﷻ) blessings in the appropriately larger context. He says in *Sūrah al-Nisā’*,

All who pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle shall be among those upon whom Allah has bestowed His blessings: the prophets, and those who never deviated from the truth, and the righteous ones; and how goodly a company are these! (4:69).

Are we to believe that those who are described by the All-Knowing as good company would easily come to blows because of marginal *fiḥī* technicalities?

In this central *sūrah*, notice that the speech changes from the third person, “**Praise and thanks are due to Allah...**” to the first person, “**You (alone) do we conform unto.**” This refocus from one form of speech to another is one of the eloquent styles of the Qur’an. Besides its value of expression, which can in full measure be appreciated by those who read, understand, and communicate with the Qur’an, it also has an interpersonal quality.

Note that as we read this *sūrah*, we praise and thank Allah (ﷻ), as we should, but we do so as an introduction to our asking Him to guide us. This is indeed the proper tone for an address from

a human to the Divine. We do not praise Allah (ﷻ) because we want to ask Him a favor; we praise Him because He deserves to be praised. And we follow that up with a plea that is also a natural expression of those who are always in need of Allah's (ﷻ) direction, and are not arrogant as to assume that they need no guidance. We are asking Allah (ﷻ) for direction several times each and every day.

Some people are obsessed with the pronunciation of the letters and words of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*. Of course, the letters must be pronounced as accurately as possible, but if some are unable to faithfully pronounce a particular letter or word, that should not deter from reading the *Fātiḥah* out loud when it should be recited as such. If Muslims were to be held responsible for the exact, precise and meticulous pronunciation of the Qur'anic Arabic words as a prerequisite to accessing their meanings, they would be stifling each other's confidence in relating to the Qur'an. Naturally not all people, Muslims and potential Muslims, are familiar with the letters and sounds of the Arabic alphabet. When they learn to recite the Qur'an, they may not be able to vocalize the sounds precisely as they should be. This is an opportunity for Muslims to cooperate with each other, to teach and learn, to talk and listen, rather than to become a cause of discomfort, embarrassment and discord. The last *āyah* in the *sūrah* asks Allah (ﷻ) for *hudá* (guidance); the word is *ihdinā* (guide us). Notice also that the following *sūrah*, *al-Baqarah*, states in its first *āyah* that the Book is guidance for those who are protective of Allah (ﷻ), the *muttaqīs*.

Another issue raised by this *sūrah* is about the nature of divinity. In Islamic history, some intellectuals posed questions about what seemed to be very serious issues. One of these was whether Allah's (ﷻ) mercy (*rahmah*) was an intrinsic part of His self or only a description of one of His manifestations? This type of argument also polarized Muslims during the second and third Islamic centuries. The Qur'an is indeed a Book that addresses the mind; it is intended to engage the intellect. But when it comes to such issues of divinity, human understanding is bound to remain incomplete, despite man's worthy efforts to understand Allah (ﷻ) as well as possible

through His revealed Word and through His creation. Allah (ﷻ) has characterized the Qur'an as a book for people who think,

The parable of the life of this world is but that of rain which We send down from the sky, and which is absorbed by the plants of the earth whereof men and animals draw nourishment, until — when the earth has assumed its artful adornment and has been embellished, and they who dwell on it believe that they have gained mastery over it — there comes down upon it Our judgment, by night or by day, and We cause it to become [like] a field mown down, as if there had been no yesterday. Thus clearly do We spell out these [power] messages unto people who think! (10:24).

But on issues for which the Qur'an does not provide a clear and distinct explanation, Muslims are left to their collective judgement and common sense provided the established facts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are not violated or contradicted, and as long as such use of God-given intellect does not lead into obscurantism or irrelevancies.

It does not make sense, for example, to argue about the colour of the dog belonging to the companions of the Cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*, 18:18). Nor does it add to any relevant understanding to speculate as to which part of the cow was used to strike the murdered person (2:73). It is pointless and humiliating to argue about the size of Noah's ark or the type of wood it was made of when reliable information on such matters is simply unavailable. Nor does it serve any purpose to try to discover the name of the boy who was struck by the man of virtue (the sage) as narrated in *Sūrah al-Kahf* (18:74). When such issues unexpectedly emerge, Muslims should try to engage their minds within such areas as are proper and relevant, and with full respect for their Creator. They should not act as though they know more about Him than He revealed, or more than He has permitted them to learn through trial and error, experience, and observation.

The *non-ghaybī* (materialistic) mind has, at various times, tried to attack the *ghaybī* mind by posing such questions as, “If people of faith believe that God is Almighty, then is He capable of creating something stronger than He is?” Such questions thrive on the ignorance of the Godless generation and on the relative naiveté of people of faith lacking the ability to reason. Muslims know about one hundred attributes of Allah (ﷻ), such as Wisdom, Knowledge, Reason and Judgement. But their knowledge and understanding of Him are limited to what information He has made accessible. This being the case, it is hardly their place to challenge Allah (ﷻ) on such issues, any confusion on which can arise only from their limited understanding rather than His unlimited attributes. It is far more proper for Muslims to try to learn and internalize what they are told about Him than to double-guess what they are not told.

In our journey through the meanings of the Qur’an, we will no doubt encounter those who, either as a matter of ignorance or through deliberate mischief-making, try to deflect us from reviving the pertinent and germane meanings of the Qur’an into our lives. To them we quote the *āyah*,

And upon you [too] have We bestowed from on high this reminder, so that you might make clear unto mankind all that has ever been thus bestowed upon them, and that they might take thought (16:44).

We shall steer clear of those who want to obscure the main issues of the Qur’an by exaggerating minor ones. We will not spend precious time on arguing, for example, the definition of a Makkān *sūrah* as opposed to a Madīnan one. Is a *sūrah* revealed in Makkah after *al-Fatḥ* (the Conquest) at *Ḥajjāh al-Wadā’* (the Farewell Pilgrimage) Makkān or Madīnan? Can we consider *āyāt* that were revealed during the Madīnan era but far away from Madīnah, such as during the military campaigns, Madīnan or not? In such issues, no matters of faith or practice are involved and they are irrelevant distractions from the main themes and substance of Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance.

The word *mālik* in the *āyah* “**Māliki yawmi al-Dīn**” is read in two different ways. One way, in a particular *qirā’ah*, is *Māliki*, which literally means possessor or owner. In another *qirā’ah*, the same word may be rendered as *Maliki*, which means sovereign or king. The difference is in the extension or contraction of the second letter, the vowel “a,” which gives the word two alternate meanings. The Arabic consonants, however, do not change: *Mīm-Lām-Kāf*. Nor does any other vowel change.

The first generation of Muslims pronounced the word both ways, with the endorsement of the Prophet (ﷺ) resulting in a variation of the meaning of the *āyah* without any contradiction, as there is clearly a relationship between propriety and sovereignty. It is only people with limited understanding or who deliberately seek to undermine man’s affinity with Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance that cannot accept mutually supportive meanings of the same word construct, and argue for one meaning against another. During the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ), what are referred to as the seven *qirā’āt* (renditions) of the uniform Qur’anic text were authorized by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. The written text of the Qur’an is one, has been one, and will remain one but the human reading of the text was given latitude in ways that reflect and enhance the many-layered meanings of the glorious Book. This is an area which will continue to require further elaboration as pertinent such instances occur in the divine Book.

Of the seven who were authorities on these *qirā’āt*, ‘Āṣim, al-Kisā’i and Ya’qūb rendered the Arabic pronunciation with a long vowel, giving the word the meaning, Possessor. This rendition is substantiated by the Qur’an itself, as another *āyah* says, “[It will be] a Day when one soul possesses nothing [of benefit] for another soul” (82:19). The other rendition of the word “*Mīm-Lām-Kāf*,” meaning Sovereign or King, also has its Qur’anic substantiation, “And His will be the Sovereignty on that Day...” (6:73). So when the Prophet (ﷺ) did not object to this plurality of readings of the Qur’an, how should people today have the temerity to impose their particular and exclusive meanings on the words of the Qur’an?

When we speak about this *sūrah*, we cannot avoid speaking about *ṣalāh*. It is this *sūrah* that is the cornerstone and essence of *ṣalāh*. Its meanings should be enough for us to set aside our self-centeredness and to resist any impulses of evil or sinful temptations. Still, there are worldly kings and earthly proprietors who consider their power and wealth to be ornaments or privileges that they have earned and so deserve. And there are those who read this *sūrah* in their *ṣalāh* and then return to their executive suites or seats of power and surrender to their carnal beings and their bestial appetites, making a mockery of the whole process of *Fātiḥah* and *ṣalāh*. And yet the meanings of the Words of Allah (ﷻ) that we so often and routinely repeat in the presence of the All-Seeing, the All-Hearing, and the All-Knowing are perfectly clear.

And construct your *ṣalāh*: for, behold, *ṣalāh* restrains [man] from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason; and remembrance of Allah is indeed the greatest [good] (29:45).

Verily, man is born with a restless disposition. Whenever misfortune touches him, he is filled with self-pity; and whenever good fortune comes to him, he selfishly withholds it [from others]. Not so, however, those who consciously affiliate with Allah in *ṣalāh*, and who incessantly persevere in their *ṣalāh* (70:19–23).

Woe, then, unto those praying ones whose hearts from their *ṣalāh* are remote — those who want only to be seen and praised, and withal deny all assistance [to their fellow men]! (107:4–7).

There are also hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) to the effect that if the *ṣalāh* does not repulse a person from foul behavior and abominable deeds, it serves only to place a distance between Allah (ﷻ) and the person going through its motions.²²

Endnotes

- 1 The Qur'an is divided into sections, each section being referred to as a *sūrah*. There are 114 *sūrah*s in the Qur'an. The word *sūrah* is preferable to the word *chapter* because the former delivers guidance describing a unique set of integrated behaviors; the chapter of an ordinary book gives information bound by a theme, but does not require the reader to modify his preexisting behaviors. Not so with the Qur'an, as it continuously challenges the reader. Each *sūrah* is divided into individual thoughts, ideas or directives, called *āyāt* (plural of *āyah*). Each *āyah*, literally, means a manifestation of Allah's (ﷻ) power. In any case, the use of *chapter* and *verse* will be unavoidable; however when they are used, *sūrah* and *āyah* should be understood.
- 2 Mishkāh al-Maṣābīh.
- 3 Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1411AH), vols.1–2, pp.53–55.
- 4 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 5 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 6 “*Cogito ergo sum*: I think therefore I am.” A saying attributed to the French mathematician cum philosopher, René Descartes (1596–1650 CE), considered by many to be the “Father of Modern Philosophy.” Dissatisfied with the vagueness and uncertainty inherent in traditional European philosophical approaches, he embarked on a new philosophical direction in which he would displace uncertainty by essentializing the logical provability of mathematics. Unlike other species (plants, animals) which, he felt, were incapable of rational and structured thought, humans could think; and thus, he believed that the very basic thing he could prove beyond any doubt was that humans were thinking. And since he, in particular, was a thinking being, he existed; hence, “I think, therefore I am.” And everything else would be built on this foundation of thought and existence. More specifically, knowledge and wisdom would accrue from the thought processes of man. Descartes' philosophical thrusts were the first to rationalize the secular man-centered universe which is responsible for current Western ideological formulations.
- 7 In this *tāfsīr*, the terms *Children of Israel* and *Banū Isrā'īl* (literally the Sons of Isrā'īl (ﷻ)) are used interchangeably and refer to the same group. Isrā'īl (anglicized, Israel) refers to Prophet Ya'qūb, the son of Prophet Ishāq, who himself was one of the sons of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ﷻ).

- 8 Battles that the Prophet (ﷺ) participated in (*Badr, Uhud, al-Aḥzāb, and Tabūk*) as the Commander in Chief, or authorized but did not participate in (*Mu'tah*).
- 9 *Sīrah* – the biographical life history of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).
- 10 *mujāhid* – literally, one who participates in a jihad. However, since the term *jihad* is often misrepresented and thereby misunderstood, the following description more aptly describes a *mujāhid*: one who actively strives with the force of arms (usually as part of an organized group of similarly-minded Muslims) to make an environment receptive to the establishment and institutionalization of Islamic principles of social justice.
- 11 Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1411AH), vols.1–2, pp.53–55.
- 12 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 13 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 14 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 15 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 16 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 17 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 18 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 19 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 20 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 21 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 22 From previous *tafsīrs*.

2

Sūrah al-Baqarah, Part 1

The Cow

Sūrah al-Baqarah, the longest of the Qur'anic *sūrah*s, immediately follows the opening *sūrah*, *al-Fātiḥah*. Except for *āyah* 281 which was revealed at the time of *Ḥajjah al-Wadā'* (the Farewell Pilgrimage of the noble Prophet (ﷺ) in the tenth year of the Hijrah), the rest of the *sūrah* was revealed in Madinah. As is the case with all the Madinan *sūrah*s, the emphasis is on civil and legal matters. A number of hadiths attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) refer to the status of this *sūrah*:

Satan is repelled by a home in which Sūrah al-Baqarah is recited.¹

Read Sūrah al-Baqarah; for reading it is a blessing; abandoning it is a grief; and [those who are trying to] annul it will not be able to do so.²

Everything has its crest [peak or zenith] and the Qur'an crests with Sūrah al-Baqarah.³

The *āyāt* of this *sūrah* were revealed at different times during the Prophet's (ﷺ) tenure in Madinah, the earliest ones coming in

the first days of his arrival in Madinah. The *sūrah* also contains some of the last *āyāt* to be revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the tenth year of the Hijrah. The sequence of these *āyāt*, as they are presented in the Qur'an, is referred to in Islamic terminology as a *tawqīfī* issue. In other words, the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (and all other *sūrahs* of the Qur'an) were arranged in their present order by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, and not, as some suggest, at a later date. One hadith, reported by Imams Bukhari and Muslim, states that Jibrīl (Gabriel (ﷺ)) would attend the Prophet (ﷺ) during the nights of the month of Ramadan, and that the Prophet (ﷺ) and Jibrīl (ﷺ) would recite to each other the heretofore revealed *āyāt* of the Qur'an.⁴ In this manner, the sequence, order, arrangement and course of the *āyāt* were taught to the Prophet (ﷺ) by Jibrīl (ﷺ) who could only have ascertained this knowledge from Allah (ﷻ).

A broad overview of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* shows that it has three main thematic discourses. The first one spans the initial 39 *āyāt*, the second extends across *āyāt* 40–176, and the third traverses *āyāt* 177–286. Some *āyāt* between these thematic sections may be considered transitional, and thus become an issue of *ijtihād*⁵ as to whether they belong with the preceding or the following discourses. Such transitional *āyāt* occur in many of the Qur'an's longer *sūrahs*.

Additional to the three main sections, two parallel threads are interwoven into the tapestry of this *sūrah*. One revolves around the role and nature of Banū Isrā'il (the Children of Israel). In Madinah, they were a troublesome faction with links to the *munāfiqs* on the one hand and the *mushriks* of Makkah on the other. These Israelis actively sought to thwart the consolidation of the nascent Islamic presence — a divine reality on earth — in Madinah. Throughout the second part of this *sūrah*, the Israeli defiance of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the politically and economically emerging Islamic community is brought into penetrating focus.

The second thread, unfolding in the third segment of this *sūrah*, sheds light on the amalgamation of the new Islamic reality in Madinah. It shows how the Islamic polity moved to defeat the treacherous Yahūd, who eventually revealed their contempt and hostility to the divine and eternal message of Islam. Muslims are

warned not to make the same mistakes and plunge into the pitfalls which cost these Israelis their “covenant” relationship with Allah (ﷻ), and disqualified them from being the heirs of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).

Contextual Overview

To precisely understand *Sūrah al-Baqarah*'s themes and patterns, it is necessary to be aware of its historical context. Those formative situational circumstances find their parallels in many other places and times throughout Muslim history. Generations of Muslims have faced the forces of *kufri*, *nifāq*, and a Judaism that has been polluted and perverted by racism, nationalism, class prejudice and discrimination. The enemies that emerged to try and subvert the newly established Islamic State in Madinah continue to plot against Muslims whenever and wherever Islamic movements are struggling to establish Islamic states. The lessons offered in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* are thus essential tools for Muslims now confronting these recurring enemies of Islam, whether they were in Madinah immediately after the Hijrah, or currently in Iran, Sudan, Algeria and Afghanistan 1,400 years later. That it exposes the foes of Islam⁶ — past, present and future — is a continuing miracle of the Qur'an.

The shift of the Islamic base from Makkah to Madinah occurred when it became clear that Makkah was no longer suitable for the inauguration of Islamic authority on earth. After 13 years of unrelenting revelation and propagation, the inhabitants of Makkah, or the Makkan society in general, demonstrated they were incapable of launching the new Islamic system. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not pack up his bags and leave because he ran out of patience; nor was it a “flight” as is often portrayed. The decision to seek an alternative base for the establishment of Islam had been taken much earlier. Only the timing of the move was determined by the the Prophet's (ﷺ) patient *tabligh* (dialogue and deliberations) which was causing the *mushriks* of Makkah to chafe and eventually pushed them to move against him.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) tireless dissemination of Islamic knowledge and insight in the form of the Makkan *āyāt* provoked the powers of

Makkah to plot an assassination, when all other attempts to silence him had failed. Internal Makkan circumstances apparently favored the Qurayshī position; the Prophet's (ﷺ) wife Khadijah had passed away, as had his uncle Abū Ṭālib. Both had provided him with personal, social and economic protection. The expansion of Islam in Makkah at this point had reached an impasse. Although a tiny minority of Muslims in Makkah defied the inevitable harassment and torture, the cultivation of Islam in Makkah had effectively reached a point of diminishing returns.

This standoff in Makkah had become like theater for the rest of the people in Arabia. All of Arabia, with its complex tribal arrangements and intrigued by the threat to the Quraysh in Makkah, was watching and waiting to see the outcome of this confrontation. Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), stood on one side, and his angry Qurayshī kinsmen led by Abū Lahab, Amr ibn Hishām (better known as Abū Jahl), Abū Sufyān and other well-known figures of Makkah amassed on the other. Compounding this drama was the fact that the relatives of the Prophet (ﷺ) were the custodians and caretakers of the Ka'bah, which all Arabs recognized as a noble and holy sanctuary. These peculiar circumstances in Makkah moved the Prophet (ﷺ) to look for a more conducive base of operations. He needed a place which would be receptive to the divine message and where he could move and act freely according to the dictates of the guidance provided by Allah (ﷻ).

The move from Makkah to Madinah was preceded by a number of other attempts to relieve the pressure on the young Muslim community. One was the migration, on instructions from the Prophet (ﷺ), of a number of Muslim pioneers from Makkah to Ḥabashaḥ (roughly corresponding to today's Ethiopia). Some historical sources claim that these Muslims fled Makkah to save their lives. If that was the case, it would have been the very poor, rather than the better-off Muslims who would have gone to Ḥabashaḥ. The poorer Muslims — the second-class citizens of Makkah who were tortured, persecuted and put under tremendous pressure — were the ones who stayed behind. Those who embarked on the journey to Ḥabashaḥ were the ones who had status in Makkah, par-

ticularly the Muslims of Qurayshī social background, including Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, the Umawī, and some youth from Banū Hāshim who were guards of the Prophet (ﷺ) including al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, and Abū Salamaḥ al-Makhzūmī. Women, who because of the social customs of the time, were not subjected to any physical pressure in Makkah, also joined the voyage to Ḥabashaḥ.

Part of the objective of this *hijrah* may have been to send an implicit message to the upper-class families of the Quraysh; Umm Ḥabibaḥ, the daughter of Abū Sufyān, the strongman of the *jāhiliyah*, was among those Muslim pioneers. It was Abū Sufyān who did his utmost to obstruct the advance of Islam and simultaneously intensified the campaign against Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ). Another outcome of this Islamic search for freedom and safety was the acceptance of Islam by Najāshī (the Negus), the ruler of Ḥabashaḥ. This fact was not made public because of the influence of the Christian religious establishment that would have taken issue with him. Prophetic narrations to this effect are unambiguous.⁷

The Prophet’s (ﷺ) failed mission to the town of Ṭā’if may also be interpreted as an attempt to secure a safe base of operations for the stateless Muslims. This undertaking was not successful because the patricians of Thaqīf (the Arabian tribe which dominated Ṭā’if) responded with great hostility to him, instigating their mobs to pelt him with stones until his feet bled. It was not until he sought protection by standing behind the wall of ‘Utbaḥ and Shibaḥ, the sons of Rabi‘ah, that he was able to escape these attacks. In these moments of despondency and alienation, he recited a *du‘ā* that should become the standard for all Muslims who find themselves estranged and dejected by the powers that be, and the social norms of *jāhiliyah*. His heart-felt words were,

O Allah! To You I complain of the vulnerability of my position, my lack of power, and the way society has humiliated me. O Most Merciful of all! You are the Sustainer of the oppressed, and You are my Sustainer. To whom do You relegate (consign) me? Is it to an enemy whom You have assigned my affair? Or

is it to a stranger who sneers at me? But if You are not angry with me, I do not care [about such things], although Your support [unto me] would be reassuring. I seek the refuge of Your visage and appearance out of which darkness is dispelled and from which the affairs of this world and the coming one are restored and remedied. I beseech you not to inflict me with Your wrath, nor unleash upon me Your indignation (resentment). To You I offer my friendly reproach, for there is no power nor force except that [which comes] from You.⁸

What followed was a breakthrough. As if from nowhere, came the first allegiance of al-'Aqabaḥ (*Bay'at al-'Aqabaḥ al-Ūlá*), followed shortly by the second. These two pledges of allegiance are tied into the introduction to this *sūrah* and to the circumstances that prevailed at Madinah, as well as to the epic statesmanship of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ).

The events leading to these two pledges of allegiance began about two years before the Prophet (ﷺ) was to seek asylum in Yathrib (later to become Madinah). First, he met with a group of Khazrajīs, one of the two main power blocs in Yathrib, during Hajj, a time when the Prophet (ﷺ) made a point of presenting Islam to those who assembled in Makkah. Note that, in order to present Allah's (ﷻ) message to whomever would listen, the Prophet (ﷺ) had no difficulties or complexes about going to Hajj at a time when it was dominated by *jāhili* rituals and practices. He would even solicit protection and security from those who were present at Hajj, provided they would do so in order for him to publicize and promote Allah's (ﷻ) program for man. And this is despite the fact that these Khazrajīs were not yet Muslims!

At that time the two power blocs in Yathrib, the Aws and the Khazraj, had been under the influence of the Jews, who were spreading the word that, based on their knowledge of the scripture, it was time for the emergence of a prophet. These Jews believed, of course, that the awaited prophet would emerge from amongst them, that he would be for them, that he would lead them out of their predicament and that he would support them against their enemies.

So when the Khazraj heard what the Prophet (ﷺ) was telling them during their pilgrimage to Makkah, they reflected on their exceptional situation in Yathrib. They understood that this must be the prophet the Jews had long been talking about. They pondered the consolidating elements in the Muhammadi statements. Soon, they realized that they could be the first to take advantage of this opportunity by offering the Prophet (ﷺ) the protection he needed. And so they approached the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “We left our people (in Yathrib) where enmity and mischief among the different factions is at an all-time high. We hope that Allah will cause you to consolidate them.”⁹ When the Khazrajīs returned to Yathrib, they explained to the people their encounter with Muhammad (ﷺ). The peoples’ response was both welcoming and favorable.

The following year, another delegation from Yathrib came to perform the Hajj at Makkah. This included members of both the Aws and the Khazraj. On this occasion, they jointly pledged allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ), affirming in the presence of al-‘Abbās, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) uncle, that they would offer him the same quality of security they had for themselves and their possessions. This combined allegiance by members of the Aws and Khazraj is referred to as *Bay‘ah al-‘Aqabah al-Kubrā* (the major allegiance at ‘Aqabah).

According to some narrations, ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāhaḥ said to the Prophet (ﷺ) the night before the pledge, “State the conditions you desire for yourself and for your Sustainer.” He replied,

I state my Lord’s condition: that you should comply and conform to Him, and that in this regard you should not equate or associate anyone with Him. I stipulate for myself that you offer me the security that you provide for your own selves and wealth.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked, “And if we agree, what shall we receive in return?” He said, “*The Garden.*” They replied, “A profitable transaction, binding on both sides.”¹⁰

It should also be noted that the Quraysh and the Makkan authorities, although exerting pressure on the Prophet (ﷺ), did not

tell him he could not go for Hajj to present his message. They understood the political and economic dimensions of this new *dīn* and ideology, and the threat it posed to them but they did not tell him that he would be politicizing the Hajj. The contrast with the Saudi “guardians of the Ḥaramayn” today could hardly be greater; if they were in charge of Makkah and Hajj at the time of the beloved Prophet (ﷺ) they would no doubt have told him that his understanding of Hajj is wrong, and would have accused him of *rafath*, *fusūq* and *jidāl* at Hajj! It turns out that the *mushrik* and *kāfir* opponents of the Prophet (ﷺ) — with all the harassment, intimidation and pressure they exerted to stifle Islam and the Qur’an — were positively honorable in their approach to Hajj compared to the restrictions imposed by the Saudi *munāfiqs* and their satanic sponsors.

The joint pledge of allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ) made by the Aws and Khazraj was an ideological, political and military agreement. With this type of decisive contractual agreement, Islam would soon become the dominant force in Madinah. The community that had been besieged in Makkah was given a new lease on life in Madinah where a Muslim was to be found in every household. The downtrodden Muslims of Makkah began to stream to a welcoming and hospitable Madinah, often fleeing with nothing to offer except faith and commitment. They were received in Madinah with open arms, a friendly environment and a brotherhood that immediately integrated them into the Madinan society in a manner rarely witnessed in the annals of human history. That pioneer generation of quality Muslims set a standard of brotherhood and selfless altruism that has yet to be matched, even by today’s contemporary committed Muslims.

Having established such a base for the future expansion of Islam, the Prophet (ﷺ) and his closest companion, Abū Bakr, finally left Makkah for Madinah. After years of struggle, he had at last found the sanctuary that he had long sought and a base for operations that would offer him freedom and stability. It was at this time of independence and autonomy that the first Islamic State became a reality in Madinah, from the very first day of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) arrival there.

The people of Madinah welcomed the Prophet (ﷺ) with warmth and affection. A bond of brotherhood was established between the Anṣār (helpers of Madinah) and the Muhājirūn (immigrants from Makkah). This front line in the first generation of Muslims was to become the nucleus upon which the Islamic power and political structure was erected, a distinctive generation described with glowing terms in the Qur'an. They were the embodiment of truth, sincerity, integrity, selflessness, sacrifice and dedication.

A Power Classification of Humanity

Sūrah al-Baqarah begins by referring to the generic *īmān* that elevates humans onto such plateaus of achievement and accomplishment. With this broad and general introduction, the first *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, although they speak of a human condition, are no less inclusive of this core of Muslims in Madinah who made Islam more than theory. This is followed by a description of the *kuffār*. The description is general; it refers to the *kuffār* everywhere and in every time, but it is also an accurate description of the *kuffār* of Makkah and Madinah who ardently opposed and resisted the progress of Islam.

But there was another class of people who emerged only after Islam had become a power and an authority in Madinah. Notice that in Makkah, when Islam was still only a doctrine and a creed, rather than the operational model it became in Madinah, there was no class of people referred to as *munāfiqs* (hypocrites). Hypocrisy, in this context, is a product of power. In the absence of power, hypocrites do not exist. Once there is power and an authority that represents it, a new variety of people, who owe allegiance to neither one side nor the other, inevitably emerge. Their only concern is to be with the winning side, whether that side is right or wrong, moral or evil, Islamic or *kāfir*. None of this matters to these expedient and opportunistic types; their only concern is to be with those who have power.

In Makkah, such people did not emerge among Muslims, simply because Islam was a community of the oppressed and the dispossessed. But when Islam gained its power base in Yathrib — which

came to be known as Madinah, short for *Madīnah al-Nabī* (the city of the Prophet ﷺ) — the conditions were created for the emergence of this opportunistic class, designated by the Qur'an as *munāfiqūn*.

This was especially the case after the battle of Badr when the power of Islam multiplied and its prestige increased. It is as if the emergence of the *munāfiqs* (pseudo-loyalists) was a function of the military and political success achieved by the committed Muslims. Awareness of this phenomenon has to become commonplace among the ranks of Muslim activists today. Put bluntly, Islamic victories at war-fronts, Islamic progress in diplomatic circles, and the emergence of Islamic social and economic institutions, wherever they occur, are going to breed, ironic as it may sound, more hypocrites, more fifth columnists, and more turncoats.

After the resounding victory at Badr, many high-ranking *kuffār* and *mushriks* joined the Islamic tide. At a time when Islam was on a roll, they had to do so to preserve their status and possessions. So, from a business perspective, it made sense to become Muslim before it was too late. It was no longer profitable to resist an Islamic bandwagon that could neither be stopped nor derailed. These people in high places who saw the inevitability of an Islamic authority knew that their interests dictated being on the side that was growing and gaining. Their conversion to Islam became convenient and expedient as their interests mandated; they figured that there could be a change of sides without undergoing a change of heart. One prime character who exemplified this attitude was 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, whose patrons were about to crown him king just before Islam became the order of the day in Madinah.

A long and detailed description of these hypocrites forms an important part of the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*. There are also numerous other *āyāt*, throughout other *sūrah*s of the Qur'an (*Sūrah*s *al-Tawbah* and *al-Munāfiqūn*, for instance) that expose and highlight these duplicitous characters. Again and again, the Qur'an highlights the nature of these prominent social figures who felt that they were forced by circumstances to utter the *shahādah*.¹¹ These are the figures that have attitudes of tribal, national, racial, and class superiority running through their veins even though they have verbally joined the ranks of Muslims.

Then this Heavenly Book turns its light into the dark corners of the Yahūd. It introduces them as the first to take issue with Islam in Madinah. They had, of course, their own reasons for doing so. The Jews, in general, were a privileged class in Yathrib before Islam. They were a people of scripture among the scripture-less Arabians (the Aws and the Khazraj). The Arabians had no interest in adopting Judaism and the Jews showed little interest in proselytizing to them. Nonetheless, these Arabians respected the Jews as a scripted people who had access to knowledge and wisdom.

The Yahūdī Jews took advantage of the animosity between the Aws and the Khazraj.¹² It appears that these Yahūd prospered in an atmosphere of feuds and factionalism. But when Islam appeared on the scene the Yahūd were stripped of their previous privileges, even though the Qur'an, in principle, authenticated and endorsed earlier Prophets (ﷺ) and scriptures. The Prophet (ﷺ) and the Qur'an would also end the "bad blood" between the Aws and Khazraj, which was a fertile area of Yahūdī maneuvers for connivance, intrigue and profit. A new union of Muslims was made possible, based on the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, out of which an Islamic society would emerge, the likes of which mankind had never seen before.

The Yahūd claim that they are God's chosen people; that they, and only they, are people of the Books and the Prophets (ﷺ). They anticipated the coming of the final prophet, but expected that he would be from their ranks. So when the final prophet emerged from among the Arabians, they felt both humiliated and threatened, expecting that he would exclude them from his divine call and inclusive mission. They thought that the Prophet (ﷺ) would limit his scope of missionary activity to the scripture-less Arabians. But when they realized that he was calling them to Islam, at a stage when they should have been the most receptive to the new Book of Allah (ﷻ), as a people of prior scripture, their reaction was very different. As the self-centered racists and ethnicists they had become, they felt slighted. Their pride was injured; their ego was bruised. They were offended to have an "Arabian" prophet present them with God's Word, Scripture and Writ.

These racist Yahūd begrudged and resented the Prophet (ﷺ) for several reasons. First, instead of one of them, Allah (ﷻ) had

chosen the person of Muhammad (ﷺ) and assigned him a noble Book, the authenticity of which they could not doubt; and second, the swift success that preceded and followed the Prophet's (ﷺ) advent in Madinah. Moreover, they became marginalized in Madinah where previously their mercantile and money-making operations were second to none. Their usurious and profiteering businesses were generating so much wealth that they had to hate any disruptive entity. They had to decide whether to become part of the new Islamic reality with its equality, brotherhood, social responsibilities and anti-usury principles, which would curtail that extravagant wealth, or to continue to cling to the old world order that was so perniciously lucrative. They did not find it a difficult choice: they preferred funds and fortunes to faith and fidelity.

This is why *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, along with many other *sūrah*s of the Qur'an, highlights the attitudes and choices of Yahūd. It is nothing less than a miracle that the Qur'an exposes them for the generation of the Prophet (ﷺ) and for all generations to come. These Yahūd have shown no change of attitude when it comes to a choice between finances and faith. Almost without exception, they have opted for financial benefit over faith in an inclusive God whose humans are equal.

The exclusivist interpretation of their faith can be traced to their monopolistic attitude. The Qur'an speaks to them at the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) as if they are the same generation we have today, alive and kicking. This same generation wants to leave the West Bank and Ghazzah (the Gaza Strip) but desires to stay in Judea and Samaria. This same generation aspires to own al-Quds (Jerusalem) and yet disown the people and history that are part and parcel of that ancient and cosmopolitan city. This same Yahūdī mentality and attitude claims to have been the underdog of history, yet today, in front of the whole world, supports Pharaonic systems that litter the Middle East! One encounters the same Yahūdī generation that speaks about peace but prepares for war. It is the same Yahūdī generation that enters into a US-sponsored "peace process" when there are all kinds of wars — economic, hot and cold, genocidal and imposed — throughout the Middle East.

The Qur'an transcends these Israeli generations — past, present and future — by addressing them as if they were one audience. From the time of Mūsá (ﷺ) to the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) to the end of time, this Israeli cartel is predictable when it comes to any genuine representation of Allah's (ﷻ) words and the model of His Prophets (ﷺ). The Qur'an's words are as vigorous and as accurate today as when they were disclosing the true intents and purposes of the Yahūd of Yathrib.

This is a time that committees and commissions are being set up to delete all references to Yahūd in textbooks and the media, so that there should be no public criticism of them. Under such conditions there is no other option but to expose them as Allah (ﷻ) has. The Yahūd are mentioned in more than one-third of the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*. Even in the opening *āyāt* of the *sūrah*, the Yahūd feature significantly.

These eternal words of the Qur'an are a wake-up call for today's Muslims. Many of them have deluded themselves into believing that peace is achievable in the Middle East when the illegitimate state of Israel is a manifestation of all the deviations of these Israeli racists and exclusivists from time immemorial. If Muslims read the Qur'an in context, they would immediately realize that a Judaism that has been subverted by Zionism and Israelism is the same historic nemesis that went to war against Muhammad (ﷺ), the Qur'an, and the first generation of Muslims. In precisely the same way today, they attack the emergence of the Islamic movement from Iran to Sudan, North Africa to Anatolia, the Balkans to the Indian subcontinent, and beyond to Southeast Asia.

If Muslims want a Madinah in North Africa, it scares the day-lights out of Yahūd. Wherever Islam threatens to reemerge as the basis for the common good of society anywhere in the world, the Yahūd feel threatened because for them, one Madinah was enough. Wherever Muslims realize that Madinah is everyone's responsibility and not just that of a few Muslims in the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ), they find themselves besieged by Yahūd and its allied super-power forces. Their policy towards the Muslims is: never again. They mean never again do they want another place like Madinah in the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Clearly, this *sūrah* pointedly characterizes the internal threats posed by the *munāfiqs* and the dubious role of the Yahūd as the conduit of information and logistics between the *mushriks* and *munāfiqs*. In a parallel fashion, it also proceeds to consolidate the Islamic *jamā'ah* and to strengthen the Muslim rank and file. It puts the Islamic harbingers of the Muhammadi era at the front lines of humanity in place of the Children of Israel who were stripped of their guiding role and responsibilities. These Yahūd were exposed further when they chose to defy this word of truth — the Qur'anic gospel in the form of the Muhammadi revelation.

In building the Islamic *jamā'ah*, the Qur'an gives the Muslims accurate information, from a power perspective, about the various types of people around them. In the first, introductory *āyāt*, as the Qur'an speaks about the *munāfiqs* and their double-crossing, it also mentions that these betrayers refer to their *shayṭāns*. And their *shayṭāns* are the Yahūd. The *āyāt* then go on to detail the demonic features of the Yahūdī influence in the Peninsula as well as their conspiratorial nature throughout history. These two parallel threads — exposing the *mushrik-munāfiq-Yahūd* alliance, and defining the Islamic social force as it assumes positions of responsibility and power — run throughout the *sūrah* with its various topics and lessons.

Once the broad categorization of power blocs in the world is introduced — the *muttaqīs*, the *kuffār* and the *munāfiqs*, with the allusion to the Yahūd who in their particular way stand as an independent power bloc in world affairs, then and now — humanity is informed of the merit of membership in each bloc. The *kuffār* and the *munāfiqs* are warned of the fire while committed Muslims are promised heaven. At this point, Allah's (ﷻ) final authoritative position is established, and the Qur'anic invitation becomes open to all peoples to commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) and His last Book. For those even now in doubt, after Allah (ﷻ) has distilled all human endeavor and motivations down to their essences, the Qur'an expresses surprise at those who deny Allah (ﷻ),

How do you deny Allah when you were dead then He gave you life, then He causes you to die, then He caus-

es you to come back to life again, then you will eventually return to Him? It is He who has created for you everything on earth, then He reverted to the Heavens and made them seven heavens, and He is knowledgeable of all things (2:28–29).

Once Allah (ﷻ) announces that He has created everything for the utility of man, He then turns to the empowerment of Ādam (ﷺ) on earth, “**And then Allah said to the angels, ‘I am in the making of a successor on earth’**” (2:30). Then the *āyāt* detail the on-going struggle between Ādam (ﷺ) and Shayṭān which eventually ends with the covenant of empowerment on earth, the era of human commitment to Allah (ﷻ),

We said, ‘Down with all of you. But if guidance were to come to you [humans] from Me [Allah] and you were to pursue My guidance then never shall you fear nor grieve. Although those who defy and deny My *āyāt*, they are the consorts of the fire wherein they will dwell forever’ (2:38–39).

Leadership Passes to the Muhammadi Islamic Generation

The Qur’anic discourse addresses the Children of Israel at some length. The Children of Israel are invited to enlist in this final Scripture that verifies previous scriptures. They are also reminded of their earlier blunders, sins and treachery since the days of Prophet Mūsá (ﷺ). This debate ends the first *juz’* (volume) of the Qur’an.

During this series of *āyāt*, tighter focus is directed at the Israelis, especially their reaction to Islam, its Apostle (ﷺ) and the Qur’an. In Madinah, they were the first to deny and denounce Islam. They would sugar-coat falsehoods with facts, and preach to the public about God but exclude themselves. They would listen to Allah’s (ﷻ) words, understand their intent and purpose, but then spin them to suit their own purpose. They attempted to fool the committed Muslims by assuming the guise of faith and divine com-

mitment. However, in private meetings, they reminded themselves not to let the committed Muslims know about concrete knowledge in their possession, regarding the authenticity of the Prophet (ﷺ) and of the revealed Qur'an. By doing this they sought to persuade the Muslims to revert to *kufr*.

They claimed that only the Yahūd are right. The Yahūdī animus was so extreme that they expressed hostility to Gabriel (ﷺ), the archangel, because he communicated the Scripture to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and not to one of them. These Islam-hating Yahūd exploited anything and everything to discredit the Prophet (ﷺ), imputing that his statements have nothing to do with God's ordainments. In particular, they created the *qiblah* controversy, during which they stoked the fires of the *munāfiqs*, trying to have them turn the tables on the Prophet (ﷺ).

This *sūrah* is a forceful campaign against these Yahūdī machinations. They are reminded of similar connivance during the time of Mūsá (ﷺ), as well as other mistakes they had made during their long history. All these Yahūdī generations exude a common sense of disloyalty, self-centeredness and mendacity. Over these many years, centuries and generations, they have not changed at all.

This anti-Yahūd Qur'anic discourse ends by convincing the Muslims that there is no point trying to win the Yahūd over to Allah (ﷻ). Their negative nature precludes it. They asserted that simply by being the genetic descendants of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), they could lay claim to the status of God's chosen and only people, but the Qur'an renounces this claim. The Qur'an clarifies that the heirs of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) are those who adopt the character of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and honor the covenant with the God of Ibrāhīm (ﷻ), and not those who fortuitously carry his genes.

The legacy of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), the Qur'an says, has been handed down to Muhammad (ﷺ) and those who abide and commit themselves to this updated, final Islam. The problem with the Yahūd is their disfigurement, maligning, and distortion of the original covenant. This divine empowerment of man, which initially was their responsibility, would no longer be the case, and henceforth it would be transferred to Muhammad (ﷺ) and those with him. This

transfer of divine responsibilities was Allah's (ﷻ) response to Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā'īl (ﷺ) as they were laying the foundations of the Inviolable House in Makkah,

Our Lord! Have us be two [individuals] who surrender unto Your will, and also have of our posterity an Ummah that will surrender to Your will, show us our ways of conforming unto You, and forgive us, for You are Oft-Forgiving, Merciful. Our Lord! Send to them an apostle who will relate to them Your *āyāt*, and who will teach them the Book and wisdom, and who will refine them. Indeed, You are Invincible, Wise (2:128–129).

This historical shift from the children of Israel as the “light unto the nations” to the Muhammadi rededication of the Abrahamic covenant marks the third section of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*. From here on the Qur’an addresses the Prophet (ﷺ) and the first generation of committed Muslims around him. They now became the focal point around which human empowerment and divine authority interact. This new power-bloc of people ushered in a new world order with a new era of history. The world would now, no longer, be in a religious pax Hebraica.

This issue is settled by finalizing the direction of the *qiblah*. The *qiblah* was ultimately set as the Ḥaram in Makkah, the place that was designated during the time of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (ﷺ) to be the sanctuary devoted strictly and absolutely for the worship and obedience of the One God, Allah (ﷻ). This *qiblah* was desired by the Prophet (ﷺ) but was not stated publicly,

We see you [O Muhammad] turning your face skyward in confusion. We shall orient you towards a *qiblah* that satisfies you. [Then] orient yourself [in *ṣalāh* and devotion] towards the Sanctified Masjid [in Makkah], and wherever you happen to be, then turn towards it [in *ṣalāh* and devotion] (2:144).

After discussing some of the threats facing the new Islamic community, the *sūrah* then proceeds to clarify the program for this new Islamic initiative. It outlines issues pertaining to conception and veneration, actions and transactions. New ideas are presented:

- ♦ Those who are killed on the path to Allah (ﷻ), for the cause of Allah (ﷻ), are not dead.
- ♦ Infliction with fear, hunger and a loss of lives, wealth, and produce is not necessarily misfortune and misery, but trial and sacrifice through which those who persevere gain Allah's (ﷻ) grace, mercy and guidance.
- ♦ Satan promises man poverty, tempts and orders him to be immoral, while Allah (ﷻ) promises man His bounty, plenty and amnesty.
- ♦ Allah (ﷻ) is the Superior of the committed Muslims. He delivers them from ambiguity to certainty, from obscurity to illumination, while the superior of the *kuffār* is *tāghūt* (authoritarianism), who diminishes man from a rank of radiance to gloom and darkness.
- ♦ Some dietary halals and harams are traced.
- ♦ The truth and the essence of virtue are clarified: virtue is a motivational reality before it is cosmetic legalism.
- ♦ Penalties for murder, laws of inheritance, the regulations of fasting, the laws of jihad, the rules of Hajj, and some procedures relating to marriage, divorce and family matters are outlined.
- ♦ Injunctions pertinent to *ṣadaqah* (charity) and *ribā* (usury), along with guidelines and measures relevant to debt and trade are provided.

At times the *sūrah* returns to the Banū Isrā'īl and their behavior with Prophet Mūsá (ﷺ); it also gives a narrative of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). But the bulk of the *sūrah* after the first *juz'* concentrates on cementing the Islamic civil reality while preparing it for the challenges and adversities ahead. Through this process, the Islamic universal initiative emerges with a manifestly independent character which is inclusive of others so long as they yield to the Will of Allah (ﷻ).

The end of the *sūrah* echoes its complementary opening. The whole *sūrah* is lodged between the description of committed Muslims and the characteristics of divine commitment (between *mu'mins* and *īmān*).

The first major theme of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is presented in *āyāt* 1–20. These *āyāt* give us, at the very beginning of the noble Book, an overview of the broad classification of humans in Islamic terms. From the beginning of time, until Allah (ﷻ) inherits the earth, Muslims cannot classify people in any other way. These themes, defined for us by the Qur'an itself, specifically and straightforwardly identify people by how they relate to the Power of Allah (ﷻ). In the overall course of human experience, the Qur'an is telling us, there are three groups of people. These are the *muttaqīs*, the *kuffār* and the *munāfiqs*. These three designations themselves portray the various power-relationships that humans can adopt in connection to Allah (ﷻ). The first seven *āyāt* are quoted here for reference and the remaining 13 are given in a later section, elucidating the characteristics of the *munāfiqs*.

- Alif-Lām-Mīm
- That divine Writ [about it] there is no ambiguity; in it [is to be found] direction for the *muttaqīs*.
- Who believe and are committed to [the existence of] the *ghayb*, and who standardize the *ṣalāh*, and give out of what We have provided for them.
- Those who are committed to that which has been sent to you and that which has been sent before you. And of the one to come they are sure.
- It is they who are guided by their Sustainer and it is they who are prosperous
- As for the *kuffār*, it matters not whether you warn them or do not warn them: they will not acknowledge and commit [to Allah's authoritative power].
- Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their vision is a haze; and theirs is a great affliction (al-Baqarah:6–7).

۱) ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۲) الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ
 بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۳) وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ
 إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ۴) أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن
 رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۵) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
 ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۶) خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ
 سَمْعِهِمْ ۷) وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Allah's (ﷻ) words, and the meanings they convey, cannot easily be translated into the representative languages of the present, aggressively secular world order. *Muttaqī*¹³ cannot simply be translated as *pious*; *kāfir* cannot be expressed as *disbeliever* or *heathen*; and *munāfiq* cannot be rendered into a simple *hypocrite*. As alluded to earlier, in today's dominant secular culture, there is no particular human value in being either a *believer* or a *disbeliever*, a *pious* person or a *heathen*. Because of this peculiar socio-lexical context, these English words fail to convey the full meanings of the crucial Qur'anic originals. To thoroughly understand the meanings of these terms, their roots and the ways they are used in the Qur'an must be examined.

The word *muttaqīn*, appearing in the second *āyah* of the *sūrah*, and all the various forms of this word, are derived from the source word *waqá*. This source word occurs several times in the Qur'an,

And so Allah has graced us with His favor, and has protected us (*waqānā*) from all suffering... (52:27).

And Allah preserved him (*fa-waqāhu*) from the evil of their scheming... (40:45).

Thus will He have preserved them (*waqāhum*) from all suffering... (44:56).

For their Sustainer will have warded off (*waqāhum*) from them all suffering... (52:18).

And so, Allah will preserve them (*fa-waqāhum*) from the woes of that Day... (76:11).

It is clear, therefore, that at its most fundamental level, the word *taqwá* means warding off, defending, guarding, preserving, protecting, fortifying, shielding, and sheltering. The *muttaqīs*, therefore, are those who engage in this act of preserving, protecting and safeguarding themselves from the consequences of denying, defying or disobeying Allah (ﷻ). The *muttaqīs* are those who always have in their hearts and conscience an awareness of Allah (ﷻ) that keeps them on high alert against violating any of Allah's (ﷻ) values or legal codes. This is a power relationship. Humans with *taqwá* are always afraid of offending Allah (ﷻ). Their conscience is sensitized to the presence of Allah (ﷻ) in their lives and in all things around them. They know that they cannot escape the awesome presence of Allah (ﷻ). Their *taqwá* is a quality of being committed to Allah (ﷻ).

At all times in human history, therefore, there is a part of humanity that consists of these types of quality individuals who have within them a keen sense and awareness of Allah (ﷻ), and so protect themselves from the consequences of forgetting Him. When no one is watching, when no one is around, when they are by themselves, when they are in their most private and secluded moments, whatever circumstances and state of mind they are in, they remain conscious of the presence of Allah (ﷻ) to register and observe whatever they may do. This quality of being and life is the characteristic of those who are called *muttaqīs*. It is this quality that opens them to the guidance that Allah (ﷻ) has offered in His Book.

Taqwá is a function of positive action, of engagement and involvement in the world around. When a person fears the conse-

quences of disobeying Allah (ﷻ), he develops a natural aversion to doing anything wrong in any of the areas in which he is active. *Taqwá* thus gains its intensity in proportion to the level of activities and the degree of involvement a person engages in. A spirited and dynamic person will acquire a deep sense of *taqwá*. On the other hand, the *taqwá* of a relatively idle person will be frail at best. The omnipresence and omnipotence of Allah (ﷻ) do not weigh heavily on a human conscience that is withdrawn, lives isolated from the ever-changing world, in an ivory tower, or in a world of make-believe.

That assumes, of course, that a person is open to *taqwá*. If Allah (ﷻ) is excluded from the minds of humans and never permitted to influence a person, there is no prospect of *taqwá* developing. The Book is thus a source of guidance that benefits only those who acknowledge the existence of the All-powerful and Almighty Allah (ﷻ). Those who commit to Allah (ﷻ) in this way understand that they are accountable for any infraction of His order, and behave accordingly.

The other category of people referred to in these first twenty *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is the *kuffār*. This is also a generic term, referring to people who deny Allah (ﷻ), decline His guidance, and denounce His presence. As far as they are concerned, for all practical purposes, Allah (ﷻ) does not exist; or if He does exist, He has no value or impact upon their existence and being. Some of them have developed sophisticated arguments and elaborate philosophies to prove that Allah (ﷻ) does not exist; or that if He does exist in some form, He is immaterial and irrelevant to human lives on earth. Such deniers have always existed but the Euro/American age of the 20th and 21st centuries has been dominated by philosophers and theorists who have made it the main object of their intellectual work to develop complex arguments against the reality of Allah (ﷻ). All of these fancy arguments and deliberations have been given credibility and substance by institutional academia, and then popularized as factual by the worldwide media network. They are, nonetheless, parts of a deliberate campaign to conceal and disguise the fact that Allah (ﷻ) does exist and that He indeed is a

constant power presence in every element of human life, individual and collective.

These types of diehard *kuffār* whose only concern is to marginalize Allah (ﷻ) will eventually fail, and they will fail miserably. Our generation has witnessed the rise and fall of the communist and socialist bloc of *kuffār*. It does not take much to see how they themselves contributed to their own undoing. By their systematic exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) from mind and conscience, as well as from society and State, they in fact were bringing about their own decline and destruction.

These *kuffār* also have a power position vis-à-vis Allah (ﷻ). That is to say, to them, Allah (ﷻ) does not exist as a power because He does not exist as a Divinity and Deity. These types of anti-God creatures, although they may not realize it in their advanced stages of ruin, are very easy to identify. First, they themselves do not hide the fact that they are opposed to Allah (ﷻ) and whatever Allah (ﷻ) stands for. Second, they manifest clear symptoms of alienation from Allah (ﷻ) and His Book. Third, the Qur'an points them out as *kuffār*, the ones who are responsible for humanity's deviation away from its Creator and Originator. So, when this class of people gains military and political power, it uses that dominance for purposes of its own rhetoric and indoctrination. And then this partisan power becomes the instrument against the moral conscience that is a God-given quality of humans, unhindered as it should naturally be, by shallow slogans, void vituperation, and time-worn theories.

Notice that the first four *āyāt* of this section describe the *mut-taqīs*, who are sure of Allah (ﷻ) and His power relationship to man, and hence, are careful to abide by Allah's (ﷻ) guidance. Then, there follow just two *āyāt* on the *kuffār*, who put forward detailed arguments to justify their monopoly of power and the exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) from all practical power. But then there are 13 *āyāt* dedicated to exploring and exposing the shadowy characters of the *munāfiqs*, who are a class of people unto themselves. Such is the importance that Allah (ﷻ) places on ensuring that Muslims understand the shifting and unreliable nature of these

sorts. He expends more than twice as many *āyāt* on them as on the *muttaqīs* and *kuffār* combined.

The *munāfiqs* are particularly dangerous because they harbor two attitudes, two frames of mind, two behaviors, and two approaches. Their public character declares a conformity to the Will of Allah (ﷻ) while the power-bloc of committed Muslims has the upper hand militarily, politically, socially, and otherwise. However, their private attitudes belie any attachment to Allah (ﷻ), His Messenger (ﷺ), and a societal formulation based on *taqwā* and *qist*. In fact, they are known to declare open allegiance to Allah (ﷻ), not unlike the ardently steadfast Muslims, while in secret they consort with their *shayṭāns* and break bread with the *kuffār*. Before the Muslims became a power base in society, these *munāfiqs* were *kuffār*; or at least they identified and sided with the *kuffār*. It was only when they perceived a tilt in the balance of power in favor of the Muslims that they declared their Islam, their fidelity to the Prophet (ﷺ), and their “sincere” affiliation to the society of committed and concerned Muslims. This class of people will only cease to exist once the *kuffār* themselves as a class of people are finished. Otherwise, these *munāfiqs* will continue sitting on the fence waiting to see who is going to win. At the point of victory by one side or the other, they are primed to jump into the arena and proclaim their loyalty to whoever is the winner.

For these people, their verbal allegiance to Islam is merely a flag of convenience, adopted for reasons of self-interest and opportunism. They have no genuine commitment to the power and aura of Allah (ﷻ), and are ever willing to switch sides if circumstances change. Secretly, they yearn for the ease and convenience of the “good old days” — the days of quick deals, quick fixes and quick profits; the days that preceded Islam. They are characterized by an ability and willingness to say different things to different people, and a sixth sense that tells them which way the winds of power are blowing. Their political instincts permit them to adopt different faces at different times, if that is what it takes to maintain their positions and protect their interests. These types do not acknowledge the Power of Allah (ﷻ). They only

deal with Allah's (ﷻ) power as it becomes available and entrusted to the committed Muslims.

The three classes of people outlined in these opening *āyāt* of the Qur'an may be summarized as follows. First there are the *muttaqīs*, who have nothing to fear except Allah (ﷻ). They see the force and power of Allah (ﷻ) to be the only one that counts and the only one that matters. Their life is defined by this charge of *taqwā* in them. Second there are the *kuffār*, whose sole concern is to deny any recognition of Allah (ﷻ) and His control and management of worldly affairs. For them, the power of Allah (ﷻ) is simply not a factor in their life, and this denial of Allah (ﷻ) defines their lives. And third there are the *munāfiqs*, who recognize the power of Allah (ﷻ) in public, but have at their core no commitment to Him.

Alif-Lām-Mīm

Sūrah al-Baqarah begins with these three letters. It is the first of 29 *sūrah*s of the Qur'an to begin in this way, with the number of letters at the beginning of each such *sūrah* varying from one to five.¹⁴ These letters are known as *al-muqatta'āt*, or the autonomous letters. Some commentators have attributed significance to the numbers of letters. Of the 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet, precisely half — 14 — are used in this way, one or more times. They include letters from every type of vocalization: those that are vocalized deep in the throat, as well as those vocalized at the lips. The letters used are, in no particular order, *Nūn*, *Ṣād*, *Hā'*, *Kāf*, *Yā'*, *Mīm*, *Qāf*, *Alif*, *Ṭā'*, *'Ayn*, *Lām*, *Hā'*, *Sīn*, and *Rā'*.

The obvious question is: what do these letters mean? This would demonstrably help to settle the uncertainty of why they are found at the beginning of some *sūrah*s, and not of others. Definite answers to these questions remain problematic. A perusal of existing *tafsīrs*, traditional and contemporary, reveals answers ranging from frank acknowledgements of ignorance to mystic interpretations. In between, there are several rational explanations and elucidations, but all are qualified with the acknowledgement that

every explanation is essentially speculative and may well be short of the intended meaning.

To give a sense of what different *mufassirūn* have said, take three examples of their comments on these autonomous letters at the beginning of the 29 *sūrah*s. The first genre of *mufassirūn*, who may be characterized as the literalists, simply pleaded ignorance, saying only, “*Allahu a‘lam*: Allah (ﷻ) knows best.”¹⁵ Then there are the mystics who have suggested, for example, that the letter *Alif* stands for Allah (ﷻ), the letter *Lām* for Gabriel, and the letter *Mīm* for Muhammad (ﷺ).¹⁶ The third type of *mufassirūn*, taking a rational approach, have provided arguments suggesting that these letters represent the building blocks of the Qur’an. Before the elaborate meanings of the *sūrah* follow, Allah (ﷻ) is reminding the reader of the elementary and basic constituents which make up the words and *āyāt* of the Qur’an. These are the simple letters of the alphabet. This may be taken as a demonstration of the Qur’an’s composition with letters which are available to any human being. Yet this Qur’an is so beautiful and eloquent that it is unrivaled by anything humans can produce from the very same letters.¹⁷

What is of concern here is not to catalog the different approaches and attempts found in scholarly works on this issue. Today, a look back at the legacy of the *tafsīrs* should bring to light the most satisfying explanation of this mystery, as well as an appreciation of the human effort associated with its interpretation.

One thing is evident from the three types of aforementioned commentaries to these enigmatic letters. All the *mufassirūn* — the literalist, the mystic, and the rational — have thought through what the significance and implications of these letters may or may not be. It is only after such thorough consideration that they have offered their heartfelt and mind-felt interpretations. Even those who ended up confessing their inability to explain the significance of these letters did so only after applying their full rational faculties to grasping the letters’ significance. This process may itself be part of the purpose of these letters: a reminder that the Qur’an was and will remain a possession of the human mind and intellect. Islam and faith are not achievable in the absence of reason and delibera-

tion. It is a healthy Ummah that continues to engage the Qur'an cognitively, clearheadedly and coherently.

Another approach to these independent letters is to say that Allah (ﷻ), Most Exalted and Extolled, is reducing the meaning, expression and explanation that is to follow in the course of the *sūrah* in particular, and the Qur'an in general, to its precognitive instruments: the letters of the alphabet. In a sense, the reading and the vocalization of words (combination of letters forming a conceptual unit) are the means through which Man can access Allah's (ﷻ) revelation. In the absence of these letters and associated sounds, there can be no words; and in the absence of these words, there could be no scripture.

These autonomous letters may also contribute to the understanding of the Qur'an by gearing the mind and intellect to become receptive to what Allah (ﷻ) has to say in the *āyāt* that follow. These letters thus act as a means of stimulating the mind through the mind's own recognition of its limitations, as it is not able to comprehend the meaning of these mysterious letters. To paraphrase, it is the mind's awareness of its ignorance that drives it to gain more knowledge. And by focussing the mind on its ignorance and limitations, these letters act as a mental adrenaline that agitates the mind to concentrate on the following *āyāt* of the Qur'an.

These letters also had a particular impact on the Arabians of the time, who prided themselves on having mastered the art of expression and the dexterity of poetry. The challenge to them was: if, as you claim, you have complete command over Arabic idiom and phraseology, then compose the equivalent of 10 *sūrah's*, or one *sūrah*, or even one *āyah* of equal or better quality than those of this Book. The Arabians, unlike peoples of other civilizations, had no physical or material core to their culture, history or habitat. Notably, the Romans had monumental amphitheatres and architectural hallmarks to symbolize their civilization, and the Egyptians had the pyramids, and the Greeks and Persians had their physical equivalents to demonstrate their achievements, modernity and progress. However, these Arabs found fulfillment in and drew confidence from the language they used and the works of oral literature they composed in it.

Their annual festival at ‘Uqāz in Makkah was a marvellous illustration of the capacity and ability displayed by poets who could present masterpieces of style, diction and elocution. Even Arabic grammar, as a construct of human speech, is so precisely and logically structured, that its explanation requires some years of study. Presenting these poetic Arabians with letters of such beauty but no evident meaning was more than an enigma; it was a challenge to them in the area in which they thought they were incomparable.

In fact, it is this Book that remains a book of outstanding, unmatched linguistic, lexical and verbal quality. The alphabet comes to life in this Eternal Book. The Arabians were dazed and dazzled when they compared the superb composition of this Book with all of their own works. It would be like telling all the experts on the human body to assemble one lively human being after giving them all the organic constituent material needed for making the bones, the flesh, the hair, etc. Of course they would stand flabbergasted, for it would be impossible for them to construct a human being. The difference between the vibrant, living Qur’an and the linguistic products of human beings is like that between a pulsating soul and a motionless corpse.

Another peculiar function of these letters — *Alif, Lām, Mīm* — is that they are a catalyst for the behavioral expression of *guidance* mentioned in the last *āyah* of the first *sūrah* and the second *āyah* of the second *sūrah*: **“Guide us [to] the straight way” (1:6)** and **“A guidance for all the *muttaqīs*” (2:2)**. The cognitive challenge when a person reads these letters is a critical one because they do not seem to be contributing to guidance when there is no coherent and logical meaning to the vocalization of these separate letters. Thus the individual is immediately presented with the question: is my partial ignorance of elements of this Book of Guidance a factor that will obstruct and prevent my understanding of other *āyāt* of the Qur’an? Put another way: is my inability to understand some of what Allah (ﷻ) has to say an impediment to understanding most of what He has to say? So, consequently, these letters distinguish between those whose intellect is stimulated by relative ignorance and so become more attached to Allah’s (ﷻ) words, and those who

are alienated by relative ignorance and hence become more detached from what Allah (ﷻ) has to say.

Guidance for the *Muttaqīs*

Depending on how the second *āyah* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is read, it allows for a few nuance shifts in the meaning; however as a conceptual unit, the conveyed message simply becomes more comprehensive. The acceptable renditions in English illustrate the point,

That divine Writ has no vacillation about it: [it is] a guide for the *muttaqīs* (2:2).

That is the divine Writ [having] no equivocation [is] a [source of] guidance for the *muttaqīs* (2:2).

That divine Writ [about it] there is no ambiguity; in it [is to be found] direction for the *muttaqīs* (2:2).

Many translators have chosen to translate the opening words of this *āyah* as *This divine Writ* or *This Book* instead of translating them as *That divine Writ* or *That Book*. Of course, they are not clearly wrong; although *dhālika* is normally translated as *that* rather than *this*, the latter usage is also accepted. But translation is predominantly about expressing in English the fullest sense of the meaning of the original. The reason why *divine Writ* is prefaced with the word *that* is not to place a distance between us and the Book. Rather, is it to elevate the status of the divine Writ. It is an Arabic form of speech which adds esteem and prestige to the glorious Writ. It also conveys the distinction between the frail literary and communicative construct of humans on the one side, and the impeccable and cohesive verse and discourse of Allah (ﷻ), the Truth and the Light, on the other.

The divine Writ, which is an assembly of alphabetical letters conveying the most significant meanings of Man, life, and existence, proffers a text that is void of any doubt or question. Even the

most moral of beings may not be able to grasp all its meanings, but he stands in respect of the immutable truth, of its veracity and authenticity. In an age of uncertainty, the Qur'an is a beacon to all peoples, showing them the way out of confusion and nihilism into certainty, credence and confidence.

In the search for meanings embedded in the Qur'anic *āyāt*, the desire to discuss issues that appear more academic than practical will arise. At the same time, the human intellect must be encouraged to interact with the words and *āyāt* of the Qur'an to produce relevant meanings, ideas and solutions for real life. The fountain-head for these values and ways would be the Qur'an itself, and not some fancy or wishful inclination of the human self.

The autonomous letters at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, and 28 other *sūrahs* of the Qur'an, are an area that invites such rational consideration. One of the questions that arises is whether or not the letters constitute an *āyah* or not. Although the fact that *āyāt* can be constituted of no more than single words is confirmed elsewhere in the Qur'an — examples include the *āyāt*, “**AL-Raḥmān**” (55:01) and “**mud-hāmmatān**” (55:64) in *Sūrah al-Raḥmān* — the question remains much debated. This is an example of an intellectual exercise that does nothing to enhance the practical and functional presentation of a live and pertinent Qur'an.

The detractors of Islam and the Qur'an would love to see Muslims occupy themselves with issues that invite ever-deeper and inconclusive disputations, instead of focussing on the clear and unambiguous lessons of the Book. The difference between saying *This Book* and *That Book*, when translating the first words of the second *āyah* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is another such issue. There is in truth little distinction between the two possible translations. The area of semantics has been a favorite of those who seek diversions from the actual meanings of the Qur'an. In trying to find guidance in the Qur'an for their contemporary responsibilities and duties, Muslims should not be sidetracked by such abstract and pointless arguments. That too may be a lesson to learn from the mysterious autonomous letters at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and other *sūrahs* of the Qur'an.

An important factor in seeking to understand the meanings of the *āyāt* of the Qur'an is considering when and how they were revealed. Such analysis serves to stimulate the rational relationship with the Qur'an. An example that demonstrates the point is the fact that the frequent Qur'anic address, "**Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū: O You who are divinely committed**" was a form of speech that was revealed only in Madinah. This phrase used to address the Muslims was not found prior to the establishment of the Islamic state in Madinah. By contrast, note that Allah (ﷻ), the Exalted, addresses man with the words "**Yā ayyuhā al-nās: O you people**" more frequently in the Makkan *āyāt* than in the Madinan *āyāt*. It would suit the status of our Allah-given mind to begin to dwell on why Allah (ﷻ) prefers one form of words in the Madinan *āyāt*, as compared to another in Makkah.

The analytical approach to the Qur'anic presentation can only be formulated by becoming familiar with the *āyāt* of Makkah as compared to the *āyāt* of Madinah. Accordingly, the difference between a Makkan Muslim underclass and the powerful Muslim community in Madinah must be accounted for. Contemporary Muslim minds also need to think about the transitional *āyāt*, *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* (*āyāt* that were abrogated or replaced by other *āyāt*).

Furthermore, Muslims have to reflect on why some issues were addressed early in the struggle for an Islamic order, while others were tackled after the spread of Islam into the four corners of Arabia. Why are some issues addressed in general terms, while others are considered in detail? Does the Qur'an suggest additional meanings for those whose intellectual or spiritual capacity exceeds that of average Muslims? And finally, for all those who seek to integrate, interact and be involved with the direct conveyance of Allah's (ﷻ) message, the language of the Qur'an has to become their preferred medium of communication. As an example, it is reported that the Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) said,

Allah says, "I am al-Raḥmān (The Mercy-giving, the Compassionate). The name of the womb (al-raḥm) has been extracted from my Name (al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm).

Whoever affiliates with it, I will affiliate with him, and whosoever severs [his] link with it, I will sever him.”¹⁸

How does this hadith, given the knowledge of its original Arabic wording, relate to the all-out assault on the womb nowadays, in a world of abortion, population control, and planned parenthood? If Muslim minds and intellects are not fully engaged in reading the Qur’an, they deprive themselves of the manifold meanings of the divine Writ. Due to the centrality of the time’s circumstances to the meanings of the Qur’an, there is no option but to mentally assimilate the cognitive ambiance of the noble Scripture.

The oft-repeated word, *rahmah* (mercy and grace), appears in numerous places in the Qur’an. Along with its immediate linguistic understanding, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) explanation, wherever and whenever possible, is necessary to broaden and deepen the awareness of this word and its derivatives. Some hadiths illuminate this point,

*Allah created, at the time when He created the Heavens and the Earth, one hundred mercies. Each mercy is inclusive of all the heavens and earth. Out of that Allah advanced one mercy; out of that mercy all creation shares affection and care, even that expressed by animals [and beasts], as a mother expresses her love to her child. When the Day of Resurrection arrives, those other 99 mercies will be joined along with that one that was shared among all creation. This combination of *rahmah* will be placed between Him [Allah] and His creation. The hapless is he who is bereft of these countless mercies.¹⁹*

Some attempts at unravelling the meanings of the separate letters at the beginning of some *sūrah*s attribute the following to Imam ‘Alī, “Alif, Lām, Rā’, and Ḥā’, Mīm, Nūn, are letters that spell *al-Rahmān*. Allah has abbreviated His name into these separate letters in different *sūrah*s. Once combined, they become one of Allah’s [designated] attributes. These are the genesis of His Name.”²⁰

One other contribution rendered unto us in our beneficiary years from the early interpreters of the Qur’an is the definition of

īmān. Some of them tell us that *īmān* is a confluence of three derivatives: faith, acknowledgement, and praiseworthy behavior. Whoever breaches the faith component of *īmān* is a *munāfiq*. And whoever refuses the acknowledgement of *īmān* is a *kāfir*, and whoever violates the code of conduct of *īmān* is a *fāsiq*. In these three dimensions of *īmān*, there is a psychological and behavioral profile of conviction and creed; anyone whose conduct in any of these areas is fouled by ulterior motives and interests is regarded — whatever his outward appearance and confessions — as a *munāfiq*.

The mental or intellectual depth of *īmān* is characterized by a rational synchrony with the cognitive expressions thereof. Any theories, ideologies or beliefs that conflict with the mental construct of *īmān* become an expression of *kufr*. By extension, the physical and behavioral departure from *īmān* becomes an act of *fusūq*. Out of this *fusūq* (degeneration, disintegration) emerges the actual ideology of anti-Allah (ﷻ) establishments and societies with all their varieties and variations.

When people show signs of failing to live up to their God-given standards, when people no longer want to honor the morals and ethics which maintain the integrity of individuals and societies in their healthy and prosperous conditions, then they will eventually and inevitably decline into the state of decomposition which is referred to in the Qur'an as *fusūq*. In the same way that *taqwá* is a precursor to *īmān*, a generic human condition that fosters a relationship with Allah (ﷻ), *fusūq* at the opposite end, is a precursor to a failing human condition, an environment that becomes an omen for social ruin and catastrophe.

This blessed Book — consisting of divine meanings expressed through the medium of words — is best interpreted by itself. While Allah's (ﷻ) words describe the Book as “**A [source of] guidance for the *muttaqīs***” (2:2), He also expanded our attention to see the influence of this same divine Writ, the pure Qur'an, on those who are not *muttaqīs*,

Say! Unto all who are committed to Allah, this [divine Writ] is a guidance and a panacea; but as for those who

will not commit to Allah — in their ears is deafness, and so it [the Qur'an] remains obscure to them: they are [like people who are] being called from a faraway place (41:44).

Thus, step by step, We bestow from on high through this Qur'an all that gives health and is a grace to those who are committed [to Us], the while it only adds to the ruin of those who are bigoted and condescending (17:82).

Yes, whenever a *sūrah* [of this divine Writ] is broadcast [from Allah], some are prone to ask, “which of you has this [message] strengthened in his faith?” Now as for those who are committed to Allah, it does enhance their conviction, and they applaud the good news [that comes from Allah]. But as for those whose hearts are diseased, each new divine revelation adds but another [element of] aversion to the animus they already harbor, and they die while [still] refusing to acknowledge the truth (9:124–125).

And the Yahūd say, “God's hand is shackled!” It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by Allah] are they because of their assertion. No, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been broadcast [from Allah] upon you [O Prophet] by your Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth (5:64).

It is clear, therefore, that the sacred Qur'an is guidance to those who are amenable and adaptable to its contents, inscription and intent. The way to identify those who are agreeable with the Qur'anic epistle is to look for human beings who have *taqwá*. Though they may be of different religious persuasions, they must have the characteristic of considering Allah (ﷻ) in everything

they do. When the force of Allah (ﷻ) is so overwhelming in their emotions and in their thoughts, they are the first to display an indication of listening to the pertinent meanings of the Qur'an should such meanings be reasonably presented to them.

A word about this immutable Book, the noble Qur'an, is in order. The contemporary world prides itself on having mastered the physical sciences; it claims to be going where no man has gone before. This world is led by a Western civilization that claims to be ahead of outdated scriptures, antiquated religion and an extinct divinity. The human components of this Western civilization are dazzling the world with the latest technological inventions, the most recent space discoveries, and an ever-increasing volume of data derived from scientific investigations and experiments. Yet at the same time, as this Western civilizational creature displays blind confidence in his scientific feats, he also exudes an unmistakable air of uncertainty and confusion in other areas. Whither, then, the Western civilization?

Think, O Muslims, as you are taught to think by Allah's (ﷻ) book. Think of this wretched human creature of the Western civilization (and this also applies to the followers of other religions which are subservient to the diktats of the Western model) who has stuffed his ego with his scientific accomplishments. After all the fanfare about the ages of Enlightenment, Religious Protest against the Church and God, the French, American and the Bolshevik Revolutions, and most importantly, this civilization's Age of Reason, he emerges as directionless and as confused as ever. He has no *qiblah*. His life is empty because he lacks certainty, direction and purpose.

The mind that they released from centuries of slavery and incarceration wanders aimlessly looking for resolve, security and a purpose of being. Purpose has eluded it because it has considered and investigated everything except this Book of unquestionable divine Origin and Integrity. The ungodliness of this hedonistic and materialistic Western civilization has driven generation after generation into meditation, cults, and guru veneration, as the hippies went to the Orient in search of spiritual comfort and solace. Yet none of these have satisfied the young and the restless. Others in

these lost generations seek meaning in drugs, prostitution and crime. Yet the Western mind refuses to take a closer look at this Book from Heaven. The self-doubt, anxiety, indecision and insecurity have destroyed the individual as well as family and community. The social fabric of every society belonging to Western civilization is being shredded.

One would think that the liberal and open mind that came out of five centuries of reform, reorganization and revolution might be capable of taking a mature and rational look at the Qur'an, that it would decide thereafter whether there is something genuine or not about the Book. But no, and that is, itself, a symptom of the failure of the whole of Western civilization, a civilization that characterizes itself as one of discovery and inquiry.

They speak wishfully about a "new world order," but their statistics divulge horrific figures of rising crime, increasing sexual perversion, escalating economic dislocations, increasing class polarizations, irreconcilable gender feuding, and mounting racial tension verging on civil disobedience and even war. There is the obvious beginning of the disintegration of the nation-state international political order imposed on the world by a self-centered nationalistic and militaristic Europe. There is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and numerous other alarm signals of different kinds going off all over the place, yet this hegemonic Western civilization seems determined on a course of self-destruction, come what may.

There is nothing new in this. Previous godless civilizations committed the same fatal mistake. All sinful civilizations end up at this lethal point of no return when they are intoxicated with power, inflamed by power, then impaired and destroyed by that power. As went other civilizations so will go this one too, *inshā'allāh*.

This second *āyah*, right at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, also expresses a key element of the glorious Book: it is a source of guidance and advice like no other book. Guidance and counsel are its essence. Guidance and education are its contents. Guidance and enlightenment radiate from it. But to whom and for whom? All of this is available to what kind of person and people? Right at the

outset, this *āyah* makes the issue clear: it is guidance for the *muttaqīs*, for people of *taqwá*.

Characteristics of the *Muttaqīs*

This *taqwá*, this realization of Allah's (ﷻ) ever-present power, and the human vigil against incurring the consequences of punishing power, is a function of the heart and soul. It transcends the cultural and traditional components which add weight to a person's creed, persuasion or religion. A person may be a non-Muslim but have *taqwá*; for such a person, this Book, this Qur'an becomes a source of light and direction. To qualify for what the Qur'an has to offer, *taqwá* is a necessary prerequisite. The effect of this *taqwá* is that it unlocks obdurate attitudes. It is this *taqwá* that prepares the human to receive, reciprocate and respond to Allah's (ﷻ) instructions and guidance.

Those who seek direction and guidance in the Qur'an must approach it with a sensitive, sound and stirring heart, a heart that is attentive and feels reverence, a heart that avoids deviation and is not attracted by perversities. To this responsive and inspired heart, the Qur'an opens up and begins to divulge its wonders. Allah (ﷻ) touches the heart that approaches Him with *taqwá*, tenderness, and awe.

It has been reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b about *taqwá*, and was given the following answer, "Have you ever walked through a thorny path?" Umar replied, "Yes, of course." He was then asked, "What did you do?" He said, "I prepared, girded myself and then set out." Ubayy ibn Ka'b then told him, "That is [the act of] *taqwá*."²¹

Taqwá is a sensitive conscience, a permanent sense of Allah's (ﷻ) presence and power. It is a constant awareness of the need to avoid things that displease Allah (ﷻ), as one takes all precautions against being pricked by the thorns on this path of life. These thorns can take many forms: of lust and desire, of avarice and greed, of apprehension and fear, of being afraid of powers lesser than Allah (ﷻ), or of soliciting those who have nothing to offer compared to

Allah (ﷻ). How often do we meet people with such dislocated feelings? They fear their superiors and do not fear Allah (ﷻ). They are anxious to please their chain of command, even if that means displeasing Allah (ﷻ). And they seek to scare decent human beings by raising the spectre of worldly superpowers, while dismissing or neglecting the authority and power, status and position of Allah (ﷻ).

But Allah (ﷻ) did not leave those seeking guidance in a vacuum. His words are plain, simple, enlightening and utterly inclusive. Their meanings are accessible to whomever is conscious of the corresponding human reality in their own unique experiences. The nature of these *muttaqīs* is further brought into focus by the following *āyah*,

**Who believe and are committed to [the existence of]
the *ghayb*, and who standardize the *ṣalāh*, and give out
of what We have provided for them (2:3).**

These *muttaqīs* are defined by their attachment to the reality beyond the realm of human senses. Their life and existence are characterized and determined by their bonding with the pre- and post-sensual reality. Notice that the word *yu'minūn* almost always precedes the word *ghayb*. This is because *taqwá* is the precursor to *īmān*, as *ghayb* is the precursor to Allah (ﷻ). *Taqwá* is a precondition to *īmān* as *ghayb* is a precondition to Allah (ﷻ). *Taqwá* anticipates *īmān* in a manner similar to the way *ghayb* anticipates Allah (ﷻ). The mental refinement of *taqwá* leads to *īmān*, much the same way that the mental exploration of *ghayb* leads to Allah (ﷻ). The meticulous words of the Qur'an are meant to be dwelled upon in the solitude of reflection and pondering.

The next characteristic of an advanced stage of *taqwá* is the standardization of *ṣalāh* as a feature of life. Human activity has to be tempered and regulated by the regular and routine act of allegiance to Allah (ﷻ), the Maker and the Molder of life, existence and man therein. This is a component of life whose absence is easily detected, as is the case in today's materialistic civilization, where identifying with Allah (ﷻ) is regarded as odd and abnormal.

The third feature of a cultivated *taqwá* is to freely transfer possession of what Allah (ﷻ) has provided you to someone else. Allah (ﷻ), the Most Generous, has liberally given of His Bounty to all humanity; He requires nothing (material) in return. *Muttaqī* humans are expected to do likewise. This is an Islamic norm; Muslims are to be generous with the bounties and provisions that Allah (ﷻ) has given, rather than being tight-fisted and accumulative. Yet this behavior and character is virtually unknown, indeed, almost extinct. Few who have the resources to give do so unless there is some type of immediate, worldly and selfish return for their acts of “generosity,” “charity,” and “philanthropy.” No one of note in Western civilization, or any of its mutant forms around the world, gives because of reward or compensation in some life to come, or purely for the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ).

In recent history, the closest human nature has come to reflect a culture of generosity and openhandedness is within the context of non-Western civilizations. These are the ones who were not infected with the possessive, materialistic and covetous nature of Western society and the human it came to produce. The Natives of the Americas, the Aborigines of Australia, and the Zulu of Africa, out of their caring and sharing pulse with other humans, would actually give, relinquish and offer what was theirs to other humans. Unfortunately and especially in their colonial incarnation, these other humans turned out to be suspicious, acquisitive and selfish. The givers, by dint of being dominated, paid a high price for their altruism. Even in the Muslim hemisphere, had it not been for Allah’s (ﷻ) enlightening words and the *sunnah* of upholding justice, the peoples of Islam in Africa and Asia would have been yet another example of liberal giving that turned into colonization, imperialism, and an assimilation into the militaristic culture of rapacity.

Giving, spending, and dispersing have to be done for the right cause and to the right people. Nonetheless, even for the right cause and the right people, those who would give for the sake and pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) are still rare. Remember, the norm is to have a Muslim commit to Allah (ﷻ) and thereby give — without any qualms. The essence of the *āyah* is that Muslims should be very generous when

they expend. The reason why there are people in need is because there are simultaneously people, blessed with assets, who withhold.

The Qur'an speaks about this feature of giving not on a personal level but on an aggregate level. In the same sense that there should be a mass affinity and affiliation with Allah (ﷻ) by *ṣalāh*, there should also be a mass expenditure and disbursement by those who have to those who do not have. The aim is to have a society of divinely-committed Muslims who, with clean hearts, pass on the surpluses that Allah (ﷻ) has provided them to those who qualify to receive. Later on, after Allah (ﷻ) molds this noble and magnanimous attitude, He defines who should be the recipients of His abundance.

In every post-materialistic civilization, it is the human certainty of the *ghayb* that distinguishes a cultured human being from a wild one. Once man liberates himself from the sensual world, he dignifies himself by locating his reality in the realm of Allah (ﷻ). In so doing, man does not declare war against his senses, he does not repudiate the facilities of his senses, nor does he annul the functions of his senses; he merely integrates his senses into the larger and higher reality of the *ghayb*.

Humans who live within the confines of their physical senses are akin to animals who are creatures of their senses. The status of man, from a Qur'anic reading, is certainly higher than that of beasts. Man in the realm of the absolute is less phobic and neurotic than Man who is limited to the physical dimensions of the senses and their limitations. Man's potential and aptitude to access Allah (ﷻ) through an immersion of senses into the larger picture and reality of existence is yet another qualification of *taqwá*. Our minds and intellect, through hindsight and foresight, are able to detect the *ghayb* without arguing about or disputing the God-given senses we all appreciate.

In only the last 200 years, much human effort and intellectual energy has been put to waste in the futile pursuit of denying and disproving the *ghayb*. Darwin, Freud, and Marx were pivotal figures in this "intellectual" and "scientific" campaign against a divine reality. Generations of university graduates and faculty members

prided themselves on works of elaborate gibberish, paraded as scientific theories and assumptions, all of which were supposed to convince the public, particularly in intellectually undeveloped parts of the world, that God does not exist. Departments of social sciences and physical sciences were staffed by professors who insisted on the “fact” that “God” was an outdated idea. Once upon a time, the concept was necessary when humans were weak and vulnerable, but now it is redundant to a human civilization that, by virtue of its powerful instruments, controls nature. Therefore, man needs to place confidence in none other than himself, especially not in some remote deity somewhere out there in nowhere. The time has come when Man should feel free of all that was so cumbersome about a belief in God.

And yet, now, all those “theories” are outdated, and Allah (ﷻ) is a stronger fact than ever before. It seems that the more they try to run away from the *ghayb*, the more they end up having to come to terms with it. This time around, hopefully, they will have the intellectual integrity and the mental capacity to consider a course of action that will spare them the effects of bouncing back and forth between hypocritical denial of the *ghayb* and hypocritical acceptance of it.

Man has to realize that he is limited. And, by extension, his mental range is limited. He also has to understand that Allah (ﷻ) is Absolute and His Wisdom and Plan are Absolute. Once this primary fact is acknowledged, Man can settle into a tranquil relationship with Allah (ﷻ). When the human mind does not thoroughly understand the *ghayb*, that does not mean that the human in possession of that mind has the license to rebel and deny Allah (ﷻ) Who is in command of both the human and the *ghayb*. On the contrary, it should mean that man should realize his limitations and constraints. He should acknowledge that he is not going to be able to fit the whole universe, life and existence in the cosmos (past, present, and future) into his trivial, little, and petty laboratory on a small speck of creation called planet Earth.

Looking back over the past few centuries, all this human energy has been exhausted by a human condition in a crisis of defini-

tion and in a predicament of being. The race problem in Western civilization, and the drug and crime problems in America have forced a very important question: What is the purpose of living? Abortion, euthanasia, racial cleansing, and Malthusian wars are examples of how far the divinely detached humans will go to justify what in the final analysis is a perpetuation of self-interest, the national security, and a new world order.

What distinguishes and differentiates human from animal is his cognitive and mental ability to connect with Allah (ﷻ). After the agony of the materialistic 20th century, man should be more than convinced that he has to become a post-sensual man, who prizes his sensual existence but is not dominated by it, and who acknowledges the feedback of the senses but is not chained by it.

The second element of this *āyah*, “*wa yuqīmūna al-ṣalāh*,” must not be understood only in the simple and naive translation of *praying* or *establishing prayers*. There is more to it than just praying. It means that the man-to-Allah (ﷻ) affiliation and affinity should be the collective social norm.

It is difficult for those accustomed to living in societies which have abandoned Allah (ﷻ) either directly (as is the case in the materialistic societies of the US and Europe) or indirectly (as is the case in some areas of the “Muslim” world) to even perceive of a collective human-to-Allah (ﷻ) relationship. Such would dwell not only in the individual conscience, but also in the neighborhood, at school and work, in the community, the media, public discourse, the public mind and in all the activities that are part of public life. The construct “*yuqīmūna al-ṣalāh*” means that these people who have acknowledged the realm of the supra-physical — the *ghayb* — will make the human-to-Allah (ﷻ) allegiance a tangible one.

This would be a literal and total reversal of the Western norm, a formulation that suggests “the relationship between man and God is a personal one.” The outward expression of *taqwá* is to make the relationship between man and Allah (ﷻ) a public and complete one. This means that Allah (ﷻ) exists not only on Friday for the Muslims, Saturday for the Jews, and Sunday for the Christians but on all days of the week for everyone. Committed Muslims are not

permitted, by the definition of this *āyah*, to be religious on one day and secular on the remaining six days of the week, or religious in one area of their lives and secular in others. Muslim communities and societies have to want to achieve a *taqwá* association with Allah (ﷻ) every day and in every area of their social lives, forever. This is what it means to make *ṣalāh* the standard.

“Wa mimmā razaqnāhum yunfiqūn: And out of what We have provided them, they give.” *Yunfiqūn* as used here means they allot, bestow, contribute, grant, and so on. One of the immediately evident mental images of this *āyah* depicts a man of *taqwá* acknowledging whatever he has is not his. All of it belongs to Allah (ﷻ) Who has provided it for man. What he has in his hands is only held in trust. He did not create it, it was not his before it was passed on to him, and it will not be his after he passes on. This attitude of being aloof from owning things, and referring the ownership of all things to Allah (ﷻ) fosters a true sense of caring for those who are less fortunate. It induces a feeling of solidarity and brotherhood within this large family called the human race.

The more man is detached from accumulating and enjoying “possessions,” the more he becomes attached to sharing and caring for the “dispossessed.” This process purges the psyche of meanness and selfishness. The impact on human society is such that instead of having internally fractured, mutually antagonistic and economically dislocated societies, there will be mutually loving and cooperating societies that care for the disabled, the infirm, and the juveniles. Those social dropouts in Western societies, are, in an Islamic society, social lift-ups. Since there is no *taqwá* in Western societies, the helpless feel like they are living in a world of rats and vultures. But in a civilization of *taqwá*, the helpless feel they are in the company of brothers, friends, and partners.

Infāq, the verbal noun from the verb *yunfiqūn*, conveys more than just the legalistic *zakāh*, the average *ṣādaqah* and other acts of charity. *Infāq* was urged and advocated long before the institutionalization of *zakāh* because *infāq* is the attitude that renders paying all other dues possible. Even if both the *zakāh* and *ṣādaqah* are properly observed, the duty of *infāq* may still remain unfulfilled. In a

hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) says, “[In a person’s] wealth there is a due besides *zakāh*.”²²

What about *infāq* at the inter-society level? Consider the possessive attitude that militaristic cultures take to the ownership and distribution of vital natural resources which drive their economies, but which are not physically under their immediate management influence. Consider the proxy-building that takes place in order to take control of these resources without significantly building up the donor societies. In order to unfairly and unjustly “possess” natural resources, these martial governments have become inebriated with weapons of mass destruction, with big-brother surveillance apparatuses, with economies primed for occupation and with a media heritage that demonizes all who stand in the way. In the process, they have thrown away and burned up trillions of dollars in tax revenue, not to mention the human and temporal cost.

Allah (ﷻ) is the owner of all things, even natural resources; and as such, these vitals are a gift from Allah (ﷻ) to all humanity. Within the *infāq* frame of reference, those societies who have would distribute to those who do not, all according to Allah’s (ﷻ) law. What could be more just than this? What could be more fair than a culture of *taqwā* which curtails the impulse to covet by a policy of liberal distribution? The Islamic *muttaqī* personality would initiate a systemic overhaul of this attitude of absolute ownership without magnanimity.

In a *taqwā* world, the only thing that would make societies distinctive would be their human potential which would be available for export. This is something that Muslim societies have not figured out in the modern world despite the generous encouragement to that end in the Qur’an. What vital resources are exported by the United States, France, England, Germany, Russia, China, Japan and India? The fact that the question needs to be asked indicates that it is not top-of-mind knowledge. These “powers” bank on exporting their human capital, their ability to turn raw material into profit, their ability to manage large projects, their ability to know how things work, and their ability to think things through. These are all human qualities which are transformed into universal value.

Nonetheless, socially these societies are bankrupt because, in part, that portion of the world which should be exporting the Islamic social human capital lies dormant of its thinking responsibilities.

What about *infāq* and knowledge? Today, the advanced world is besieged by security clearances, corporate secrets and confidential information. In these power circles, it has even been intimated that, perhaps, the greatest asset is knowledge, that “knowledge is power.” Concurrently, important knowledge is routinely withheld unless recipient societies agree to be politically and economically dominated, or assent to give-up natural resources, or acquiesce to the establishment of a military base. Muslims, too, have access to a knowledge, the best knowledge, the key knowledge. And this knowledge tells them that there is greater power in distribution than in accumulation, in openness than in secrecy. Be mindful of Allah’s (ﷻ) words in the following *āyāt*, taken in conjunction,

And among his wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors: for in this, behold, there are messages indeed for all who are possessed of [innate] knowledge! (30:22).

They said, “O you Two-Horned One! Behold, Gog and Magog are spoiling this land. May we, then, pay unto you a tribute on the understanding that you will erect a barrier between us and them?” He answered, “That wherein my Sustainer has so securely established me is better [than anything that you could give me]; hence, do but help me with [your labor’s] strength, [and] I shall erect a rampart between you and them!” (18:94–95).

Man, a social being, has been separated into different races, colors, ethnicities and tongues, each blessed to have had a chance to uniquely grasp a portion of Allah’s (ﷻ) knowledge. With *taqwá* woven into the larger picture, the aggregate community of human beings, by virtue of their benevolence toward each other, would possess a greater amount of Allah’s (ﷻ) knowledge than each of

them separately. Nobody's knowledge is better than anyone else's as it all comes from and ultimately belongs to Allah (ﷻ).

In the citation above, one society, represented by the Two-Horned One, simply gives knowledge without expecting anything in return. That is because he gave for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), for the sake of transferring Allah's (ﷻ) answers to those who sought Allah's (ﷻ) help. What he already had, with regard to his close attachment to Allah (ﷻ), was more valuable than anything material he would have received in compensation. And herein lies the crux of the issue: the connection with Allah (ﷻ). This is the important thing to concentrate on, our closeness to Allah (ﷻ), the Source of all knowledge, the Source of all provisions, and the Source of all wisdom. Allah's (ﷻ) guidance shows that giving freely brings people together, stockpiling sunders them apart. If Muslims were to once again become absorbed in this One limitless resource, there would be no end to the pacesetting solutions they could provide for a troubled world. This is the focus of *taqwá* and *infāq*.

The power relationship with Allah (ﷻ) known as *taqwá* is, therefore, manifested by a certainty of *ghayb*, the standardizing of *ṣalāh*, and the abundant, beneficent and generous giving from those who have to those who have not. The mutual interaction of individuals, communities, societies, and peoples giving, and individuals, communities, societies, and peoples receiving, is what completes this power relationship.

“Those who are committed to that which has been sent to you and that which has been sent before you” (2:4). The Ummah of Islam is the only one that can stand for the revelation that was bestowed upon Muhammad (ﷺ) and all those who preceded him. Muslims do not have a condescending attitude of religious superiority to adherents of earlier scriptures. The facts of the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ) are so strong, and the conviction of Muslims so sound that they express concern, curiosity and compassion for the followers of earlier scriptures who have an ambivalent and sometimes acrimonious relationship with their own scripture. In a sense, the People of the Book are like children who need to be educated and cultivated when it comes to scriptural and apostolic issues.

The Muslims may be innocently proud of their position as the heirs to scriptures, Prophets (ﷺ) and divine teachings. The biblical heritage and the apostolic history have been and will continue to be a trust of those whose convictions are Qur'anic, Muhammadi, and Islamic. It is this perception that gives Muslims an awareness of a homogenous humanity having a common history of revelation, a common line of Prophets (ﷺ), and a common and singular Deity. The result of this should be that Muslims show no bigotry or bias against peoples of other faiths as long as they live according to the principles of their faith. To Muslims, the history of commitments and covenants is a uniform history of Allah's (ﷻ) infinite, eternal care and compassion for humanity throughout time. Whatever the shifting human condition, Allah's (ﷻ) care remains with the Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ) He sent, and with the divine Script that was never altered.

“Wa bi-al-ākhirati hum yuqinūn: And of the one to come they are sure” (2:4). The materialists and the godless will ask, how can you be sure of another life to come? The answer is, with all the infractions that take place here on earth, how can you not be sure of the inevitable life to follow? It is a defeatist and escapist mindset that refuses to be convinced of a life that will bring about justice and harmony. It is the attachment to justice that delivers the conviction for a second level of existence in which all those who were wronged will be righted, and all those who inflicted injustice will be punished. We believe it not because we sat back, wished and hoped for justice in this immediate life, but rather because we worked hard and struggled for it.

One of the barometers of *īmān* is to ask yourself, when alone and in private: do I really think that there is life after death? And if I do, what am I doing to prepare for that life? How soon will death approach? Do I think of death as a distant eventuality, or an immediate possibility? The more one feels he belongs in the *ākhirah*, and he is only in this world on borrowed time, the more confident he can feel of his *īmān*. The certitude of the *ākhirah* ought to be so pervasive that a Muslim should emotionally relocate to that reality, even though physically he is still in this humdrum and mundane life.

“*Ulā’ika ‘alá hudan min rabbihim wa ulā’ika hum al-muflihūn*: It is they who are guided by their Sustainer and it is they who are prosperous” (2:5). Compare these with the lost leaders and the lost crowds of the materialistic and hedonistic generations of today’s Western civilization.

These *āyāt* were revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ), who read them to the first Islamic generation in Madinah but were not meant to be confined to them alone. It is true that in the presence of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ), the first generation of Muslims managed, by and large, to exemplify these crucial meanings, making them a fact of life, and integrating them into their own lives and decisions. This was all done in the context of a struggle for survival and power that clearly delineated the distinction between this generation and the *kuffār* and *munāfiqs* of the time. And the reason that no one could do anything about this unique devotion and dedication is so obvious that it goes unnoticed. It is because they understood their relationship with Allah (ﷻ); they knew it to be a power relationship called *taqwá*.

A society based on *taqwá* cannot be scared. What possible expressions of a dubious commitment could there be? The skeptics might say, “The enemy has more men and more weapons.” But Allah (ﷻ) has more than that. Or their 21st-century cousins may embellish a little bit, “The enemy is a ‘superpower’ in possession of nuclear warheads, ballistic missiles, rapid deployment capabilities, and weapons of mass destruction.” But Allah (ﷻ) has forces of better quality and untold quantities, because the forces of Allah (ﷻ) are characterized by *taqwá*. If this definition of *taqwá* is applied to the ritualistic Muslims, especially the leaders in Muslim countries, the absence of *taqwá* is apparent. They are afraid of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons more than they are afraid of Allah (ﷻ). They want to defend themselves by signing multi-billion-dollar military contracts with the *kuffār* and the *mushriks*. They enter into all types of bilateral and multilateral political and economic arrangements with Yahūd and their worldwide interests, hoping to seek in these alliances with their enemies, protection from those very same enemies. And then what about this thing called *taqwá*, which they seem to think is irrelevant in these domains of life?

And yet the word *taqwá* and its derivatives are mentioned more than 250 times throughout the different *sūrah*s and themes of the noble Book. If they, the *taqwá*-less, ignore this important concept in the Qur'an, they do so at their own risk. The rest of the Muslims should revive this definition and relationship with Allah (ﷻ) to gain direction and success.

What is a Kāfir?

As for the *kuffār*, it matters not whether you warn them or do not warn them: they will not acknowledge and commit [to Allah's authoritative power]. Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their vision is a haze; and theirs is a great affliction (2:6–7).

This short lesson of two *āyāt* is extremely important because it broaches the subject of defining who is a *kāfir*. It should be noted that many Muslims use the word *kāfir* interchangeably with *mushrik* and *shirk*. In fact, there is a clear distinction between the meanings of the words, as there always is in the Qur'an. Groups of words which are often imprecisely transposed include Muslim and *mu'min*; jihad and *qitāl*; *birr* and *ihsān*; and likewise *kufr*, *ẓulm*, and *fiṣq*. It is irresponsible and unacceptable to lump these words together and say they mean the same thing.

Chronologically speaking, the first mention of the word *kufr*, or its derivative *kāfirīn*, is in *āyah* 10 of *Sūrah al-Muddaththir* (the Enfolded One, the 74th *sūrah* of the Qur'an). This can be dated to somewhere between six months and three years after revelation commenced, or after the divine Scripture, the Qur'an, was initiated with the word, *iqra'*. This means that the idea of *kufr* was presented to the recipients of this glorious Scripture very early. The word *kufr* is not, in fact, a word that was peculiar to the Qur'anic idiom. It was present in the vocabulary of the Arabians before the advent of Muhammad (ﷻ) and the revelation of the Qur'an.

The primary, literal meaning of the Arabic root word, *kafara*, is to cover. Therefore, in the broad linguistic sense, a *kāfir* is one who covers. In the nomadic life of pre-Islamic Arabia, a farmer was called a *kāfir* because his job was to cover the seeds with the soil of the earth. Night was referred to as *kāfir* because it covers the earth with darkness. Had Islam been void of a power emphasis, the word *kāfir* would have remained a neutral word, not having the negative and damning sense it gained through the process of anchoring an authority of divine origin on earth.

The word *kufr* and its derivatives in the Qur'an refer to those in Makkah and Madinah, and subsequently those who are involved in a cover-up. This cover-up is basically a cognitive, mental and ideological one that develops ideas, arguments, and images that cover and conceal the reality of Allah's (ﷻ) authority, power and relevance. Any idea, philosophy or ideology that buries Allah (ﷻ) under layers of rhetoric, hypotheses and epistemology, or reduces Allah (ﷻ) to a remote, detached and powerless deity while disregarding or defying the Qur'an, amounts to an act of *kufr*.

This elaborate mental construct that comes with the package of all Godless civilizations is concerned with one thing which is not immediately obvious. This thing is *not* to disbelieve in God. It is *not* even to argue the presence of God, *nor* is it to challenge a God who is concerned only with rituals and rites. The mindset of all *kufr* cultures and civilizations is to strip Allah (ﷻ) of His Authority. By so doing they want everyone to assume, against their state of natural impulse, against their better judgement, and against the abundant evidence to the contrary, that Allah (ﷻ) is a distant, irrelevant and insignificant reality, at most.

To complicate matters, naive Muslim scholars have taken the *āyāt* of the Qur'an and approached the word *kufr* and its derivatives by translating them as *disbelief*, *unbelief*, *blasphemy*, or some other misleading or evasive word. Not only do these mistranslations demolish the whole power content of *kufr* vis-à-vis Allah (ﷻ), but the choice of words also distorts the Qur'an. The language and substance of the Qur'an are reduced to the level of the stereotypical religious words whose meanings are defined by a secular, anti-God

trajectory and which are employed as the religious idiom of all materialistic civilizations. This includes the civilization that is born of the Latin script and languages.

Hence the whole discourse and treatise that attempt to conceal the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is man's only Authority and Superior is a discourse and treatise of *kufr*. Any contributor to this grand project of denial and pretense is a *kāfir* by definition and by dereliction. Clearly stated, *kufr* (around which there is currently a "war of definition" in the blossoming contemporary Islamic discourse) applies to those who are the rational promoters and maintainer of the hodge-podge of all and every notion that omits the Sovereign and Authoritative attributes of Allah (ﷻ). The central figures of the *kāfir* trend are the theorists and logicians who spin sophisticated theories and philosophies, all having one thing in common: the dispossession of Allah (ﷻ) of His power prerogative.

"As for the *kuffār*, it matters not whether you warn them or do not warn them: they will not acknowledge and commit [to Allah's authoritative power]" (2:6). The history of the early Muslim struggle refers to particular individuals who defied and denied the concept of Allah's (ﷻ) authority and order. These included, in particular, Abū Lahab, Abū Jahl and Ubayy ibn Khalaf, all of whom remained bitter opponents of the Islamic power structure until the end of their lives. There were also two others who were fierce foes of the Islamic order throughout the Makkan and most of the Madinan years of Islamic struggle. They were among the hardest core of the *kuffār*, but later switched sides to Islam in the last year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life, when the power of Allah (ﷻ) and the march of Islam became too hard and expensive to resist. These were Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and al-Ḥakam ibn Abī al-ʿĀṣ.

Therefore, these *āyāt* were, by the confession of our *salafi* scholars themselves, addressing the brain and nerve centers of *kufr*: Abū Lahab, Abū Jahl, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Abū Sufyān and al-Ḥakam ibn Abī al-ʿĀṣ.²³ Some scholars in their *tafsīrs* have reduced Islam to rituals by saying that *kufr* is a repudiation of such established facts as *ṣalāh*, *zakāh* and the inadmissibility of *khamr* (intoxicants) only.²⁴ This is a fragmented approach which ignores the

larger reality that the reason for the *kāfir* uneasiness with *ṣalāh*, *zakāh*, our dietary laws, and other personal Islamic codes is because these “rituals” represent an Islamic power structure that has its independent decision-makers, as well as its own military and armed forces. Today, by contrast, the *kuffār* are perfectly comfortable with Muslims who only pray, fast and go to Hajj, because their prayers, fasting and pilgrimage are not contributing, reinforcing, or expressing the power-base of the Qur’an and Sunnah.

In another *salafī* interpretation explaining these references to the *kuffār*, by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, it is said that they are the Yahūd. Ibn ‘Abbās considered these *āyāt* to have been revealed to highlight the role of the Yahūd who were in Madinah during the time of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ).²⁵ The Qur’anic condemnation is severe because the Yahūd knew that Muhammad (ﷺ) was Allah’s Messenger and Prophet, but they chose to ignore this knowledge and worked to undermine and subvert the power-base of Islam for their own reasons. Later in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, the Qur’an goes further in exposing these dishonest and devious Yahūd,

Indeed, those who withhold that which We have dispensed through revelation in the form of evidence and guidance after We have explained to the people in the Book, those [who do this] are damned by Allah and damned by people (2:159).

It should, of course, be acknowledged that only the Yahūdī sages were aware of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) authenticity and credibility. Many ordinary Jews would not have been aware of this, and simply followed their leaders blindly, as flocks have always done.

The leaders of Yahūd in Yathrib spared no effort in trying to undermine the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission. These Yahūd knew from their own scriptures that such a prophet would come, and realized that Muhammad was that Prophet (ﷺ). But still, they chose to conceal their knowledge of the advent of this Prophet (ﷺ), preferring instead to campaign against him by attacking his character and integrity. Their covenant requires them to convey this truth to

their people but they chose to conceal this vital information. This was not because of the fact that they had trouble with the rituals introduced by this Prophet (ﷺ); there were no rituals introduced during the first 10 years of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission. The real reason that the power-mongers of the time so fiercely opposed his message was because of its power implications.

The Yahūdīs addressed by this *āyah* as the strongmen working against the consolidation of an Islamic power center in Madinah included Ḥuyayy ibn Akhtab, Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, and others. The Yahūdī religious establishment, with its rabbis and sages, provided the dynamic foundation for the machinations of these politically active Yahūd. It was because of these Yahūdī maneuverings against the emerging power of the Prophet (ﷺ) that these *āyāt* were revealed.²⁶ The Yahūdī campaign of disclaimers and infidelity was such that Allah (ﷻ) revealed these *āyāt* to unmask their *kufr*.

“Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their vision is a haze; and theirs is a great affliction” (2:7). What this *āyah* means is that these deniers of Allah's (ﷻ) power have worked up their own rhetoric and propaganda, waxing eloquent on the theme that Allah (ﷻ) is without authority. They begin to believe what they are saying. They do not encounter an immediate penalty or response from Allah (ﷻ) to their grave deviation, so they convince themselves that He, the Almighty, is nowhere around to be noticed or to be taken seriously. When Allah (ﷻ) offers them the opportunity to reconsider, to assess the results of their empty lives and lifestyles, to repent and ask forgiveness for their errant ways, they cannot see Allah (ﷻ) as having a power role, being in command and control of all aspects of human life in this world. The power they have enjoyed has corrupted them so much that they no longer have faculties of reasoning and hearing to see and understand the historic reality confronting them.

This Qur'anic description applies just as well to the self-styled superpowers of today. Their overbearing think-tanks, institutions of strategic analysis, governmental checks and balances, and many other agencies and departments know how to present and market ideas that exclude Allah (ﷻ) from their power equation. As they

surf the crest of this power-wave, little do they know that they will be encountering, sooner or later, divine wrath. The issue of *kufr* and *kuffār* is also discussed elsewhere in the Qur'an, and some 'alims have considered that both *kufr* and *imān* have varying degrees of resolution and reservation, decision and indecision, tenacity and vacillation. These will be discussed in due course.

Considering the various explanations of these *āyāt* at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, there is no contradiction between them. The *āyāt* can easily be seen as being inclusive of all the *kuffār* who try to debunk the power contents and policies of Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet (ﷺ). Whether this *āyah* was sent to highlight Abū Jahl and his five relatives who were killed at Badr, or the Yahūdī sages who denounced this divinely appointed Prophet (ﷺ), or the enmity of Arabian *mushriks*, it still remains inclusively explanatory. It applies to all those enemies who, then and now, scheme busily to thwart any attempt at consolidating a power position for Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ) and the committed, dedicated, sincere and struggling Muslims.

One final point needs to be made regarding this *āyah*: the implications of the word *warn*. The divine instruction to the Prophet (ﷺ) is to deliver to these *kuffār* an ultimatum: if they do not desist from their opposition to Allah's (ﷻ) power presence, they shall meet with doom and destruction. Notice that the Prophet (ﷺ), and by extension all those who adopt his model, are not instructed to engage the *kuffār* in a friendly dialogue or in amicable discourse. This is because the issue is not one of theology; it is one of power, government, and leadership. Alas, this simple reality was understood by many *kuffār* at that time but is not thoroughly understood by most Muslims of our time.

The Enduring Fifth Column

- And there are [some] people who say, “We are committed to Allah and the Last Day,” while they are not [really] committed.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَيَأْتِيهِمُ الْآخِرُ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾
 يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يُخَدِّعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ
 ﴿٩﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا
 يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ
 مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا
 قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ
 هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا
 وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ
 يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا
 الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهَدَىٰ فَمَا رِيحَتْ بِجَدَرَتِهِمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾
 مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ
 بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ صُمُّ بَكْمٌ عُمَىٰ فَهَمْ لَا
 يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ
 أَصْبَعَهُمْ فِي ءَادَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾
 يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ

قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ

شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

- They collaborate to deceive Allah and those who are [really and actively] committed — but they [in fact] deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not.
- In their hearts is disease, and so Allah lets their disease increase; and their share is a tormenting affliction because of their lying.
- And when they are told, “Do not cause corruption on earth,” they say, “We are but improving things!”
- Oh, verily, it is they, they who are spreading corruption — but they perceive it not!
- And when they are told, “Commit yourselves as other people committed themselves,” they answer, “Shall we commit ourselves [to Allah] as the weak-minded committed themselves?” Oh, but indeed, it is they, they who are weak-minded — but they know it not.
- And when they meet those who have committed themselves [to Allah], they assert, “We are committed [as you are],” but when they are alone with their demons, they say, “Certainly, we are with you; we were only mocking!”
- Allah will mock at them, and will protract their [appalling] aggression, while they act obscurely;
- [For] it is they who have purchased deviation in exchange for guidance; and neither did their bargain yield a profit, nor did they wind up being guided.
- They are like people who kindle a fire: but as soon as it illumined all around them, Allah takes away their light and leaves them in senseless darkness:
- Deaf, dumb, blind — and [now there is] no recourse.
- Or [like] a torrential storm accompanied by darkness, thunder and lightning: they put their fingers in their ears because of

the thunderbolts in fear of death; but Allah encompasses [with His might] all who are *kuffār*.

- The lightning well-nigh takes away their sight; whenever it gives them light they walk therein, and whenever the light is out, they stand still. And if Allah so willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight: for, truly, Allah has power over all things (al-Baqarah:8–20).

Now the Qur'anic text takes us into the world of the *munāfiqs*, a world of a thousand mirrors. *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is only one of several places in which the Qur'an discusses these *kuffār-in-camouflage*. *Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn*, much of *Sūrah al-Nūr*, and many other *āyāt* in the Qur'an address the same issue.

One definition of a *munāfiq* is one whose words are contrary to his deeds, whose inner nature is different from his outward behavior, whose internal thoughts contrast his external expressions, and whose public character is completely different to his private disposition. This *nifāq* is strictly a post-Hijrah development. Accordingly, it is described and characterized in *āyāt* that were communicated to the Prophet (ﷺ) in Madinah.

In Makkah it was the other way around. There, some Muslims reluctantly had to appear to be *kuffār* when in fact they were Muslims. Since Muslims did not have power, they were forced to conceal their Islam in order to avoid persecution or worse. But when Muslims gained power in Madinah, the situation was reversed. Now it was some among the *kuffār* who claimed falsely to be Muslim for hidden motives of their own.

The difference between the two situations is that the powerless Muslims in Makkah were in danger if they professed their *īmān* whereas the *kuffār* in Madinah faced no such threat as long as they honored the agreement concerning the coexistence of different faiths under Muslim rule. One element of this was that the *kuffār* should not become enemies of the Islamic order, threatening it politically or militarily. The *munāfiqs* were not motivated, therefore, by concerns regarding their faith of conviction but rather by an interest in restoring, or at least preserving the polit-

ical status quo and the associated privileges which they had previously enjoyed.

Even at the beginning of the Islamic presence in Madinah when many members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes became Muslims as well as Jewish individuals such as ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām, there was no clear class of *munāfiqs*. At that time, Muslims had the authority but they did not exercise their power, so there was nothing for those who were not genuinely committed to this new Islamic order to fear. Initially, the Prophet (ﷺ) remained on friendly terms with the power factions and power blocs in and around Madinah, be they Yahūd or *mushriks*. But the critical turning point occurred when the Muslims scored a resounding victory at Badr. Now the political power of Islam was demonstrated for the first time and people took note of it. With the emergence of a power struggle between Islam and *kufri*, everyone had to decide where they stood.

‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, for example, was a chieftain in Madinah, belonging to the Khazraj, whose power was on the rise in Yathrib at the time that the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived there. He saw the peoples’ acceptance of Islam as a threat to his position and when the Battle of Badr sent strong signs of Muslim power through society, he said, “*Hādha amrun qad tawajjah* (this affair [Islam] is on its way in).” What he meant was that Islam now has to be reckoned with. He then publicly embraced Islam, along with others who were in similar positions, as well as others who were of the previously scripted people in Yathrib. It is at this point in time that *nifāq* appeared among the people of Madinah and its Arabian nomadic surroundings.

It should be noted that as far as the information in the historical record, there were no *munāfiqs* among the Muhājirūn. The reason is that the Muhājirūn left Makkah voluntarily, leaving their lands, possessions, families, and all that they had as a willing sacrifice for Islam, when they embarked on that historic journey to Madinah. They had, therefore, no privileges, no status and no interests to protect if and when Islam came to power. Their *hijrah* itself was proof of the depth and sincerity of their commitment to Islam; in such types, the question of *nifāq* simply did not arise. They

had virtually parted company with worldly allurements and earthly attractions for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ).

It was always likely, therefore, that the *munāfiqs* would appear among the Aws and the Khazraj despite the fact that it was they who willingly offered the Prophet (ﷺ), the Muhājirūn and the rest of the Muslims, an opportunity to create the first Islamic State. These social processes are not limited to Madinah; they are among the sorts of historical phenomena that repeat themselves throughout history. Anytime there is a power-expression of Islam, the three different types of human nature are revealed as defined in these *āyāt* of the Qur'an: the committed Muslims whose loyalty is unquestionable, the committed *kuffār* whose enmity is open, and the pseudo-Muslims and *kuffār-in-hiding*, who publicly pledge allegiance to the Islamic State but whose genuine attachment, devotion and loyalty is to *kufr*.

A pertinent issue arises from this *munāfiq* stratum of society. What is to be done with people known to be *munāfiqs*? What does an Islamic authority do with those whose tongues pledge their allegiance to Islam but whose hearts beat with the enemies of Islam? What do Muslim decision makers do about fifth columnists and nonconformists?

The solution is found in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ): to have these traitors demonstrate their treachery. The Prophet (ﷺ) knew well who the *munāfiqs* were, but he did not act against them simply on the basis of this knowledge. Thus there can be no legitimate grounds for premature or preemptive action against these types although it may have been suggested at one stage, if a hadith related by the Shaykhayn (Bukhari and Muslim) is correct. This reports that the Prophet (ﷺ) said in this context, "I hate for the Arabs to talk about Muhammad killing his companions,"²⁷ indicating that — if this is an accurate hadith — there were *munāfiqs* even among the *aṣḥāb* (companions) of the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Prophetic model demonstrates clearly the necessity of a *munāfiq* committing some overt act of treason before any ruling or judgement is made against him. He must actually commit acts of sabotage or subversion in order to incur a penalty, which may even be the death penalty. For possible *munāfiqs* whose actions fell short of

such sedition and who were described as *al-mu'allafatu qulūbuhum* — those whose hearts are potentially reconcilable — the Prophet (ﷺ) would provide assistance from the Muslim treasury despite knowing that some of them may prove to be *munāfiqs*. Knowing that a particular person or group are *munāfiqs* is one thing, and all steps should be taken to ensure the security and stability of the Islamic polity and society; but the implementation of harsh measures against individuals on the basis of suspicion alone is an infraction of justice and should not be tolerated. The Islamic state is not totalitarian, but should not be a naive and exploitable one either.

There is a hadith found in the collections of the Shaykhayn, as well as other collections, according to which the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

*I am ordered to carry arms (do battle) with people until they state “there is no deity/authority except Allah.” When they say it their lives and possessions become sanctified except if they violate its prerogative. Their accountability remains, though, with Allah (ﷻ), the Hallowed, the Majestic.”*²⁸

What this hadith means is that once someone asserts the *shahādah* (the declaration of faith), he is taken to have joined the established order of Islam. He is no longer considered to oppose Islamic authority or governance, clearly and directly. Some people say what they mean and mean what they say, so when they utter the *shahādah*, they accept its validity and its implications. There are others who may say the *shahādah* but in their hearts they question or even dispute the meaning and definition of this article of faith as explained and practiced by the Prophet (ﷺ), the early generations of Muslims and the rest of the Ummah.

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, the plight of *munāfiqs* on the Day of Judgement is explained,

They [the *munāfiqs*] will call out to those [who are divinely committed], “Were we not with you [back in the world]?” [to which] the others will answer, “So it was! But you [in the previous world] beguiled [and

duped] yourselves, and you bided your time [looking for earthly opportunities], you were vacillating [in anticipation of the Final Day], and you were tempted [by worldly expectations] until Allah's command came to pass" (57:14).

The camouflage of some of these *munāfiqs* is so good that even the Prophet (ﷺ) himself was unable to identify them. The words of the Qur'an are reassuring,

And of those around you of the Arabian nomads are [to be found] hypocrites, as well as from among the people of Madinah, who have grown insolent in [their] hypocrisy. You will not always know them but We know them (9:101).

Now, had We so willed, We could have shown them clearly to you, so that you would know them as surely as by a visible mark; but [even so], you will most certainly recognize them by the tone of their voice (47:30).

It has to be said, once again, the description of *munāfiqs* and *nifāq* is one that is applicable to individuals and cliques who are located between two established power centers: the power centre of *īmān*, and the power centre of *kufr*. There are no *munāfiqs* when *īmān* does not have a power centre, a power structure, and a power base. Therefore, the assumption of some Muslims that there are *munāfiqs* in Muslim countries who once had an Islamic power structure but do not have one today, is mistaken, and has potentially debilitating effects on the contemporary development of a sound and effective Islamic reassertion.

As this *tafsīr* is written (in the year 1418AH), there is only one country where *nifāq* is a reality of life: in the Islamic State of Iran. Outside of Iran, in the whole hemisphere of historical Islamic lands, there is no established Islamic power. And because of that, no *munāfiqs* are to be encountered. Of course, there are *munāfiqs*

and *nifāq* according to the limited, strictly linguistic definitions of the words, which convey the meanings of hypocrites and hypocrisy, respectively. Of course, such hypocrites and hypocrisy abound everywhere, even where Islam is not a factor in power. Muslims seeking to contribute to the struggle of the contemporary Islamic movement should develop an accurate vocabulary of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They should rise above the sometimes immature use of key Qur'anic terms that have a particular and serious connotation in the real world.

Having said that, the psychological, the interpersonal and the social forms of *nifāq* are the building blocs for the eventual *nifāq* of military and political treason. This is outlined by a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ),

Whoever mingles three traits becomes a sterling munāfiq; and whoever has only one of them has a mannerism of hypocrisy until he parts with it. [These traits are:] (1) When he speaks, he lies; (2) When he promises, he breaks his promise; (3) And when he is trusted, he betrays [the trust].”²⁹

Considering that these first 20 *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* are delineating power relationships, it behooves the engaged Muslim to understand their vocabulary in context. And he should not diminish these Qur'anic concepts of power — *taqwā*, *kufr* and *nifāq* — by reducing them to a pre-Islamic context.

“Divine Light reveals the true nature of *nifāq* and *munāfiqs* on earth...” (Qur'an 2:11). This *āyah* effectively tells the committed Muslims (the *mu'mins*) to caution these types not to instigate disruption on earth. The scale of this warning is instructive. It indicates that these types of saboteurs can potentially cause mischief on a global level. The root of this instability is the fact that there is a segment of Islamic society whose true allegiance is to the *kuffār* although it pretends to be Islamic. When one portion of an Islamic society lends itself to forces of *kufr*, however discreetly, it encourages the aggressive tendency of the *kāfir* power-mongers to attack the Islamic authority.

A situation in which Muslim citizens of an Islamic State meet with representatives of *kāfir* forces and deny that they are Muslims in the political sense of the word is clearly very serious. They may practice the rituals of Islam, but their political and power affiliation is not with the Islamic authority, government or administration. Their sentiments, their aspirations and their ambitions lie in the secular and the *kāfir* established order.

When these traitors, who are found in all Islamic societies at all times, defend themselves, they argue that they are a bridge between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds, that they are the catalyst for mutual understanding, and that if it was not for them, the camps of *kufr* and Islam would be in permanent war. In fact, these alleged *mu'mins* are themselves the cause of instability and unrest which result in conflict between the Islamic and *kufr* spheres of power. It is precisely this stratum of society that causes wars and spreads instability on a global scale.

Notice that in the *kufr* sphere of the world, there are no committed Muslims who pretend to be *kuffār*, much less organized groups who owe dual or multiple loyalties. One of the reasons for this might be that in the struggle to establish an Islamic State, the champions of Islam generally come from the lower classes of society. Therefore, they have no reason for pretending to be sympathetic to the aggressive force of *kufr*. The *munāfiqs* on the other hand, mouth Islamic sentiments while trying to actualize a state of *kufr* within the Islamic power sphere. They are more likely to come from the upper or privileged classes whose hearts follow where their financial and worldly interests lead.

The Qur'an brings the characters and personalities of these *munāfiqs* into the open. As these *munāfiqs* return to their superiors for advice and reveal their innermost thoughts, Muslims are informed of the nature of their superiors. Who are they? First, consider the words of the Qur'an, **"And when they are in confidential meetings with their demons..." (2:14)**. Allah's (ﷻ) use of the word *demons* (*shayṭāns*) conveys the nature of the advice's source. These demons were the masters, the bosses and executives in the Arabian power structure. They were the Yahūdī rabbis, the commanders of the

mushriks, and other *munāfiqs* in high positions. Should any Muslim for one moment believe that such covert relations between the *munāfiqs* and their *kāfir* masters have ceased to exist? Far from it. Fourteen centuries of contriving and conniving has blossomed into the current situation where *munāfiqs* occupy the highest positions in the Muslim world. In the process, the power structures of Islam have been destroyed. Now the overwhelming majority of Muslims find themselves powerless, defenseless and stateless.

Before the Islamic reassertion of power in Iran, the heads of state in the Muslim domain could not be *munāfiqs* in the full sense of the word since Islam did not exist as an expression of authoritative power. Now that it exists in Iran (and existed briefly in Sudan during the 1990s), an argument may arise inasmuch as the secular rulers in Muslim lands feel threatened by the emerging power of Islam. Those who defend authoritarian rule could say that the *munāfiqs* were never kings and presidents or rulers and sovereigns at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). So how can the rulers in Muslim lands today be categorized as *munāfiqs* when a *munāfiq* disguises himself to hold on to privileges and material interests? There should be nothing complicated about this answer: the kings and other rulers of the Muslim world today need not disguise themselves as they are in the highest office of the land.

Evidently new dynamics have been injected into the power configuration, dynamics that, once understood, will help the young and active members in the broad Islamic movement identify both the internal and external enemies. It will also become easier to see when and how far they converge, and to what degree one has assimilated into the other, in terms of their attitude towards the Islamic movement.

The Islamic references and sources tell us that these *munāfiqs* in the first generation of Muslims were ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, Jadd ibn Qays, Mu‘tib ibn Qashir, and their accomplices. In the case of today’s power expressions of Islam — Iran, and for a while, Sudan — Masoud Rajavi and Şādiq al-Mahdī come to mind as individuals who should be regarded as *munāfiqs*.³⁰ In Iran, Islamic authority, Islamic government and power are synonymous. In other

words, a similar process to Madinah has evolved there. It is significant to note that both Rajavi and al-Mahdī were exposed after the power base of Islam mobilized against the enemy in battle, as was the case after the battle of Badr. Notably also, *munāfiqs* such as ibn Sallūl, Rajavi and al-Mahdī have followings of like-minded troublemakers who collaborate with the external enemies of Islam to try to undermine the power-bases of Islam. This is a scenario that is likely to be repeated wherever Islam is transformed into the power that it is supposed to be.

Allah (ﷻ) lets us know how these *munāfiqs* feel towards an Islamic power that has its dedicated and sincere followers and leaders, **“In their hearts is a disease, and so Allah lets their disease increase...” (2:10)**. This sickness in their hearts is a combination of rancor, malice, resentment and hatred. Their bosoms rage against Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) and his committed rank and file followers. These *munāfiqs* are cowards and are perplexed by the fact that Muslims repeatedly succeed despite all the odds against them. The aura of confidence conveyed by committed Muslims irritates them. The more the Prophet (ﷺ) expresses this confidence, the more they are vexed. Nothing could be more irritating than the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statement, *“Alarm and panic paves the way for victory at a month’s distance.”*³¹

The more the Muslims advance, the more they defeat the forces of *kufir*, the more power they gain, and the more military victories they achieve; the more these *munāfiqs* fume with spite, bitterness and venom, and the more faint-hearted they become. And the more they lose hope, the more their hearts generate rancorous feelings, emotions, ideas and thoughts against the committed power base of Muslims. And yet they themselves are totally unaware of these developments. The nature of *nifāq* is such that it anaesthetizes the hearts and minds of those who carry it.

Although it may be hard for the committed Muslims to immediately detect these *munāfiqs*, some, nonetheless, expose themselves by their words and deeds. Most of the *munāfiqs* emerged among the affluent sectors of society. And when they realized that they had to join with those of lower rank, they were incredulous and referred to

them as *scum* and *fools*. Who may they be talking about? Would they be alluding to Suḥayb, Bilāl, Khabbab and other individuals from the poorer and dispossessed sectors of Arabian society? Or also, would they be referring to ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām, a Jew who became a Muslim? Their attitude, not being one of brotherhood and fraternity, betrayed them.

The Arabic construction of the *āyah*, “***Alā innahum hum al-muḥsidūn...: Oh, verily, it is they, they who are the purveyors of corruption***” (2:10) emphasizes its point regarding the *munāfiqs* in four distinct, specific ways. The use of the term *Oh* attracts the attention of the person spoken to; the word *verily* adds emphasis; as does the repetition of the pronoun *they*; and the use of the definite article, *the*, particularizes the noun.

A survey of the *munāfiqs*’ descriptions in these *āyāt* reveals ten characteristics they possess. All are indicative of their twisted and tortured nature: lying, deception, craftiness, stupidity, mockery, corruption, ignorance, deviation, vacillation and derision of committed Muslims. The *munāfiqs* referred to some committed Muslims as fools or idiots because these Muslims were dedicated and devout even though they came from humble backgrounds and means. The derogation of the Muslims also indicates nationalism and racism, as well as class bias. Thus they would particularly attack the African or black Bilāl, the Roman or white Suḥayb, and the Persian Salmān. In the circles of the *munāfiqs*, these “inferior” Muslims were a laughing stock. When ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl would see these Muslims, he would say to his fellow *munāfiqs*, “Here come the world’s kings!”³² Many of those who behaved in such a manner were from the Yahūdī community of Madinah.

This *munāfiq* frame of mind and behavior, seen time and again through history, has resulted in a cycle of self-destruction: they try to outwit Allah (ﷻ), but Allah (ﷻ) outwits them. Their modern equivalents use media and public relations channels to ridicule the committed Muslims: ragtag Afghan *mujāhidīn*, the *mullocracy* in Iran, Islamic justice means beheading and amputation, Muslim women wearing tents, and so on. But all they achieve is to draw attention to their own biases, vulnerability and fears. Those “ragtag

Afghans” defeated the number two “superpower” in the world; those “mullahs in Iran” proved that their administration is stronger in its social contract with its own people than the most “democratic” government in the world, the USA, which is on the verge of breaking up along racial and religious lines. Calls for capital punishment and strict, uncompromising penalties are increasing in the West’s own societies, as people strive for justice in the midst of increasing crime and disorder. It is the issue of gender equality and the status of women, however, that most bedevils the very same people who make fun of the Islamic code of dress and modesty. For all their mockery, the Muslim woman remains the most respected sister, mother and daughter in the world when she observes her modest dress, thereby not allowing herself to become an object of sexual allurements and exploitation. The paradox is that many of these *munāfiqs* outwardly abide by these Islamic principles and standards while secretly detesting all their manifestations.

To help us understand the nature of these *munāfiqs*, Allah (ﷻ) gives us two metaphors for their condition. In *āyah* 2:18, He first tells us that these *munāfiqs* are like those who kindle a fire and when it begins to radiate, Allah (ﷻ) takes away the light leaving them in pitch dark. They are deaf, dumb and blind and have no place to return to. But there is also another level of understanding in the *āyah*. And that is the agitation of a fire refers to kindling the essence of Shayṭān who was created out of the substance of fire. Racial, ethnic, national, gender, class and sectarian feelings of superiority are the fuel of this *shayṭānī* fire. Alas for these *munāfiqs*, just as they think they are beginning to see through their selfish prisms, all the lights are turned off. And even though their biological eyes, ears and mouths remain capable of seeing, hearing and speaking, there is no sense to their perceptions. And what is worse, there is no rescue from the depths of their deviation. The other metaphor likens *nifāq* to people caught in a torrential rain accompanied by darkness, thunder and flashes of lightning. This turbulent scenario forces them to block their ears out of fear, but there is no escape from the reality of Allah (ﷻ) and his power presence on earth.

At the very end of this section on the *munāfiqs*, an interesting shift of emphasis occurs. The whole lesson speaks of the *munāfiqs* but at its conclusion, Allah (ﷻ), rather than referring to them as *munāfiqs*, asserts that He has full power over these *kuffār*. This strongly indicates that these *munāfiqs*, even though they may proclaim their faith in Allah (ﷻ), are still *kuffār* because of their rejection of His power role on earth, their enmity to the committed Muslims and their alliance with those who fight the political manifestation of Islam. In the preceding *āyah*, it was fire they thought would serve their purposes, but it did not. In this *āyah* it is water from the sky they thought would aid their ends, but it too did not. Notice the all encompassing span of these metaphors, as well as the contrast between fire, the essence of Shayṭān, and water, the essence of life. Whatever the *munāfiqs* grasp for support in their opposition to Islam turns out to be in the service of Allah (ﷻ) and of no use to them.

In the ensuing two centuries after the Prophet (ﷺ), there was a group known as al-Juhamīyaḥ who held the notion that the uttering of any statement of *īmān* is enough to bring one within the fold of *īmān*. Obviously, having read the *āyāt* of the Qur'an, one can recite the appropriate phrases to be considered a *mu'min*. But it is in their practical conduct with regards to matters of power that people demonstrate whether they are affiliated to the power bloc of *īmān* or of *kufr*. *Āyah* 2:8 is forthright and crystal clear as it describes those who state verbally that they are *mu'mins*, while their power affinities are with *kufr*. The *āyah* says, **“But they are not *mu'mins*;**” that is, they are not committed to the power of Allah (ﷻ).

A valid question may arise as to how this situation arises; are *munāfiqs* schizophrenic by nature? Obviously, the environment of *nifāq* is conducive to such psychological afflictions among humans whose public posture is one thing while their private preferences are the opposite. Although some *munāfiqs* may be prone to schizophrenia, it would be a gross mistake to say that all *munāfiqs* are schizophrenics. Be that as it may, the paranoia that some of them feel may well induce multiple personalities. This could be one understanding of **“In their hearts there is sickness” (2:10).**

In this lesson about the *munāfiqs* there are two words that can be read in two different ways, although their spelling in the Qur’anic script is the same. The first is the word in *āyah* 2:9 that is given as *yakhda’ūna* in the rendition of the Kufis and Abu Amer and *yukhādi’ūna* in all the other renditions. There is a subtle difference in meaning between the two readings. The first indicates that the *munāfiqs* deceive themselves; while the second, that the *munāfiqs* mutually deceive each other. The other such word occurs in *āyah* 2:10. It is read as *yakdhībūn* by most of the Kufi renditions, and *yukadhhibūn* in the renditions of most people in Madinah, Hijaz, and Basra. The first reading means that the *munāfiqs* will be severely punished for their lies, whereas the second means they will be severely punished for accusing others (the committed Muslims) of lying. As in all cases where there are alternative readings of Qur’anic words, both readings are valid and acceptable. In no case, of course, are they inconsistent or contradictory. However these words are read, the message of the Qur’anic *āyāt* is perfectly clear.

Despite all of their dissembling characteristics, the *munāfiqs* enjoy equal civic status with all other Muslims. Their public *īmān* entitles them to the same privileges and benefits as those of the committed Muslims, the *mu’mins*. Their marriages are Islamic marriages, they inherit according to Islamic law, their share of the public treasury is the same, and the same security offered to the committed Muslims is offered to them, their children, and their properties, even though, in the life to come they will part company with the committed Muslims. They will go to *jahannam* while the truly committed Muslims will go to the *Jannah*. **“Certainly, the *munāfiqs* are going to be in the lowest depth of the fire” (4:145).**

This section ends with a power statement, **“For verily, Allah has power over all things” (2:20).** It was the disbelief of the *munāfiqs* in Allah’s (ﷻ) power that led them astray. It was the *munāfiqs*’ lack of confidence in the power that Allah (ﷻ) provides for His committed followers that made them feel more at ease with the traditional power brokers of Madinah. The *munāfiqs* of today, equally, feel more comfortable in the company of the Yahūd and *mushriks* than with those Muslims committed to the Islamic movement.

Today, the *munāfiqs* of Sudan and Iran feel sure that the power of the Western and Zionist interests will eventually defeat the motley and disorganized Islamic power of Sudan and Iran. To them, the power of Allah (ﷻ) is not part of the equation. The Rajavis, Mahdis and their ilk do as they do, and although there may not be solid proof that they have direct working relations with the Yahūd, the *āyāt* of the Qur'an indicate that it is very likely they do. At any rate, the fact that the effect of their work is to support the agendas of the enemies of Islam is clear enough.

There is another parallel between the cases of the *munāfiqs* and *kuffār* at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and our contemporary situation. The more military successes the committed Muslims achieve at the war-front, the more these *munāfiqs* agitate against them. This was the case at Badr and Uḥud, and this is the case today in Iran. The *munāfiqs'* argument goes something like this, "Look at what the superpowers have; they have nuclear weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons, biological weapons and inter-continental ballistic missiles, state-of-the-art fighter aircraft, world-class destroyers, frigates, and aircraft carriers, every sort of modern weapon that technology has to offer in the field of military research and development. Compare this and much more with the primitive and outdated weapons possessed by Muslims. The Muslims stand no chance; the balance of power is so much in favor of the other side that it makes no sense to be with the losing side. The choice is clear and we have made up our minds; we are with the winners, not the losers." Ask them where Allah (ﷻ) is in this scenario and they will dismiss the question with a chuckle or with some parting statement like, "Are you serious?"

The committed Muslims, on the other hand, consider Allah (ﷻ) to be the source of all power. There is no force anywhere that is capable of defeating Allah (ﷻ). What is required of the committed Muslims is to conduct themselves militarily and economically, as well as spiritually, morally and socially, in ways that prove and demonstrate their commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and their faith in His power. It is the undiluted devotion and dedication to Allah (ﷻ) in confrontation with the forces of injustice, inequity, and inequality that will manifest the overall power of Allah (ﷻ). Whether He

chooses to demonstrate His power at the war front, or through natural upheavals or epidemics, the inertia of His enemies or through any other way that He may choose, the ultimate decision is His. He will make the final decision when He decides that His oppressed subjects deserve His assistance, His help, and His power. Until such time, Allah's (ﷻ) power may be undetectable or invisible to the naked eye.

Throughout history, there have been reenactments of the situation that faced the Muslims at the time these *āyāt* were revealed. This is the showdown that has occurred in every age of times past and will continue to occur until the Last Day. On the one hand, there are the forces of *kufr* represented today by the world's superpowers, and the rest of humanity that has entered into an alliance with *kufr*. And on the other, there are the committed Muslims who may appear physically and militarily inferior to their adversaries but display a determination and commitment to justice and peace that will, when the time comes, enjoy the support of a Higher Authority and Greater Power: Allah (ﷻ). It is as if to reiterate this fact that Allah (ﷻ) concludes the lesson with His simple word of truth, "Indeed, Allah is powerful over all" (2:20).

The Proper Human Relationship with Allah (ﷻ)

- O People! Conform to your Sustainer, Who has created you and those [who lived] before you, so that you may protect [yourselves from His displeasure],
- Who has made the earth a resting-place for you and the sky a canopy, and has sent down water from the sky and thereby sprouted fruits for your sustenance: do not, then, claim that there is any power that could match Allah, while you know [the truth].
- And if you doubt any part of what We have bestowed from on high, step by step, upon Our subject [Muhammad], then produce a *sūrah* of similar merit, and summon witnesses besides Allah — if what you say is true!

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ أَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا
وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا
بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ ۖ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا
النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَىٰ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا
مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَتُوا بِهِ
مُتَشَبِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

- And if you cannot do it, and most certainly you cannot do it, then protect yourselves from the fire whose fuel is human beings, and the stones that await all *kuffār*!
- But to those who are committed to Allah and do the good works, give the glad tidings that theirs shall be gardens through which running water flows. Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom [Paradise] as their appointed sustenance, they will say, “It is this that in times before [earthly life] was granted to us as our sustenance!” For they shall be given something [in appearance but not in substance] that will recall that

[past]. And there they shall have spouses pure, and there they shall abide eternally (al-Baqarah:21–25).

At the beginning of this new lesson, the meanings of certain words and concepts must be reconsidered. Traditional translations and understandings, which distort and misrepresent the meanings of the Qur'an, need to be expunged. One reason that so many Muslims find English translations remote and inaccessible is that the language used to express Qur'anic meanings is often dysfunctional or irrelevant, making the meanings of the *āyāt* appear obsolete or impractical. It is crucial, therefore, that any attempts to grasp the meanings of these *āyāt* begin by capturing an accurate flavor of their essence, as far as that is possible in what can only be a limited translation and explanation.

The discourse starts with “*Yā ayyuhā al-nās,*” normally translated as “O People!” This choice of words, literal and direct though it may be, does not accurately convey the essence of the Arabic original. Allah (ﷻ) is not simply addressing people, mankind, or men, as some translators render the word *nās*. Here, and wherever else the word *nās* appears, it refers to the collectivity of social human beings. Whenever the word *people* is selected to translate the word *nās*, as this is indeed the simplest and most direct translation available in English, what needs to be understood is the full Qur'anic meaning of the term, rather than the limited and inadequate meaning of the only available English equivalent, *people*. The word is used mainly in the Makkan *sūrah*s, most familiarly in the final *sūrah* of the Qur'an, *Sūrah al-Nās*. But even before Islam became the power basis of society, people were social beings; they still are and will continue to be. How they organize their society and define their social interactions is, however, a function of their free will. It is at this point that Allah (ﷻ) addresses these social creatures with a view to properly guiding them in their relationship with Allah (ﷻ) and each other. Thus, this address, “**O social (or community) beings!**” is followed by “**Conform to your Sustainer.**” The first requirement for human order in this world is to establish the proper relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Nothing will work if this relationship has gone awry.

This lesson serves as a reminder as well as a warning, after the previous *āyāt* have classified humans into three power-blocs — the *mu'mins*, the *kuffār*, and the *munāfiqs* — each of which refer to a specific relationship with Allah (ﷻ). It gives humans the chance to wipe the slate clean and start all over again. People are communal entities who are in need of one another, and who cannot dispense with each other's potentials. Humans are prone to make errors in their attitude towards Allah (ﷻ) and His power. Therefore, it behooves them to consider redefining their relationship with Allah (ﷻ). The *āyah* thus says, **“Observe and acquiesce to your Sustainer.”** There have been social formations and social orders in the past that have failed because they did not maintain this simple but essential relationship with Allah (ﷻ), the Sustainer. The willing allegiance to Allah (ﷻ), which can neither be evaded nor exaggerated, is the key to human and social success in this world. The fidelity to Allah's (ﷻ) program is particularly critical at a time when hundreds of millions of people are trying to cope with the consequences of a “modern,” “enlightened” and “progressive” era that has set aside any thought of a deity or divinity. Along with their Western, liberal, democratic counterparts, people around the world must realize that they cannot live a normal and natural life if they do not take as their starting point the right and true concept of Allah (ﷻ) — the Sustainer of life, the universe, and creation.

This *āyah* does not demand only that people should worship their Lord. The proper and complete relationship between humanity and Allah (ﷻ) cannot be reduced to emotional, spiritual, and personal rituals or rites of worship and devotion. If these batteries of rituals and rites are performed within a larger context of denying or diminishing the role of Heavenly Authority in collective human matters, they can do little to save humanity from sociopathic creatures who are more than ready to throw God out of their lives. They can do little to protect man from those who would artfully associate God with a vicious system that dehumanizes the individual and debases his community.

We, the committed Muslims living in the West, see how free people are to worship; and many of them do worship God, whatev-

er their concept of God may be. But we also see how that “worship” is not enough. Deep down inside the Western psyche, God does not matter — He does not count. Those who have been socialized into the Western mindset are willing to discard God on a moment’s notice, especially if their faith in God is inconvenient to their economic interest. Given any situation in which they have to choose between material interests and worldly pleasures on the one hand, and God on the other, they, as a representative society, have shown that they would automatically and unthinkingly choose the former. Note here, that the explanation is not referring to *individuals*, who may each have a sincere attachment to God. Instead, it is calling attention to people whose potentials, energies and actions coalesce into an aggregate societal force that exhibits itself in society as government initiatives (war or sanctions, for instance) or corporate strategies directed towards national interest or self interest.

The relationship between the Supreme Being, Allah (ﷻ), and the inferior being, man, has to be a relationship in which man acknowledges that his life in this world is negligible or incidental compared to Allah (ﷻ). The way Western men behave is the opposite: this life is everything, and God is negligible or insignificant in comparison. This is a prescription for civilizational ruin and annihilation, as is made clear in the ensuing *āyāt* of this noble Book. History is centered around this vital fact. It is the main reason why Allah (ﷻ) commissioned Prophets, Messengers and Apostles (ﷺ) for the human race, **“And indeed within every civilization have We raised up an apostle [entrusted with this message], ‘Subordinate yourselves to Allah, and shun the powers of tyranny’...” (16:36).**

Once again, the concept of power is central in this relationship. It takes the power of a Sustainer to maintain and nurture the proper status of humans in their social relations on earth. The fact of the matter is that it is He,

...Who has created you and those [who lived] before you, so that you may guard [against His requital], Who has made the earth an accommodation for you and the

sky a structure, and has sent down water from the sky and thereby germinated fruits as provisions for you: do not, then, engender a peer to Allah, when you know [all this] (2:21–22).

The first reminder is that Allah (ﷻ) created us and all those who were born before us. Allah's (ﷻ) creation of humanity, life, existence, and all that we know, past and present, is one of the most overlooked facts of being. There is only One power that can create, and that power is Allah (ﷻ). Intelligent forms of life — humans and jinns, angels and satans — may develop, evolve, enhance, breed, convert, cultivate, derive, design, elaborate, enlarge, establish, expand, formulate, generate, improve, raise, promote, transfigure, and transform. All this they are able to do, but they are not able to create. They cannot originate something from nothing. This special characteristic of Divinity is the most unrecognized fact of life, thanks to the materialistic indoctrination of a God-denying Western civilization.

Allah (ﷻ) describes how He made earth a comfortable place to live on — a world with a sky from which He pours water, and an abundance of produce growing for our sustenance. But Western civilization has blinded us to these manifestations of Allah (ﷻ). It has conditioned us to believe that room is running out on earth, that life is becoming more and more difficult, and that resources are limited and scarce. Compare Allah's (ﷻ) accommodating and friendly description of life on earth, when human-to-Allah (ﷻ) and human-to-human relations are what they are supposed to be, with the dog-eat-dog lifestyle promoted by the mouthpieces of materialistic civilization. Hidden behind the persuasive think tanks and institutional academia are the mega-bankers and the financial lords who have turned this world into their fiefdom, themselves behaving as though they were divinities and other humans their slaves. It is particularly relevant, then, that the *āyah* concludes with, **“Do not, then, engender a peer to Allah, when you know [this].”**

But the human condition, under the spell of an aggressive and hegemonic Western civilization, is in the grip of people who are

playing the role of gods. Their use of science and technology has overwhelmed behavioral norms and erroneously persuaded people around the world that now man is in control of his destiny. In fact, it is the plutocrats who seek to control the destinies of other people for their own ends while acting as neo-gods themselves. Coincidentally, they ignore the consequences for the physical world Allah (ﷻ) has given us and the interests of the generations to come. If the human condition is to be salvaged, it has to rid itself of these impostors and resume its natural and normal relationship with its Sustainer and Maker before it is too late. The social organization of human fellowship, initiated 1,400 years ago, managed to relocate this human condition where it belongs vis-à-vis its Supporter and Upholder. The challenge now is whether we are capable of doing it again, for the salvation of the human race.

In this context, we can more thoroughly appreciate the Prophet's (ﷺ) reply to Ibn Mas'ūd who asked him, "O Messenger of Allah! Which to Allah is the cardinal sin?" The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "*To place someone on an equal par with Allah, when it is He (and only He) who has created you.*"³³ Similarly, Mu'ādh asked him, "What is Allah's right over His subjects?" He said, "*That they remain His subordinates taking no one else as their Superior.*"³⁴

We conclude from the above *āyah* and hadiths that conformity (*ibādah*) unto Allah (ﷻ) is violated by equating or associating others with Allah (ﷻ), the only Superior and the only Supreme. The issue that has always bothered mankind in its social patterns has been its definition of an absolute power, the relationship of that absolute power to human existence, and then the relationship of human existence towards that infinite power. Few societies have challenged the existence of a deity that does not exercise a power relationship with the human episode or the mortal instance. Such was the case with the Arabians and their contemporaries 14 centuries ago, and such is the case today. Thus it is

[with most people], if you ask them, "Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth, and made the Sun and the Moon subservient [to His Laws]?" They

will surely answer, “God.” How perverted then are their minds!” (29:61).

This is the recurring theme: people give God the right to exercise power over everything except their own lives. There they want God to be powerless and feeble. If Allah (ﷻ) is the Power and the Glory, if He is the Passion and the Care, then He will be present in human affairs whether they notice it or not, whether they like it or not, and whether they can help it or not. All too often, the awareness of the power of imperious human institutions is the reason that ordinary people deprecate the power of Allah (ﷻ) while applauding the worldly powers that be. “...So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [truly] committed [to Me]” (3:175).

The Inimitable Qur’an

And if you waver and wonder about what We have issued steadily from on high to Our subject [Muhammad], then produce a *sūrah* of similar quality, and call your witnesses besides Allah — if what you say is true! And if you cannot do it — and most certainly you cannot do it — then protect yourselves from the fire, whose fuel is human beings and stones which awaits all *kuffār*! (2:23–24).

This challenge goes to the heart of people’s refusal to accept this divine and written Scripture. This is not the only time the Qur’an expresses this challenge. In an *āyah* from *Sūrah al-Isrā’*, anyone doubting the authenticity of this Book is challenged to reproduce another book of the same quality and excellence. In *Sūrah Hūd*, the challenge is for anyone or any combination of people to come up with just ten chapters of similar quality and content. In *Sūrah Yūnus* (Jonah) the challenge is to anyone who thinks they are capable of producing even one *sūrah* comparable to any *sūrah* in the Qur’an. All these *āyāt*, which were revealed in Makkah, present an open

challenge. And since it was pronounced over 14 centuries ago, no one, and no organization, institute, or combination of forces, has been able to draft or compose even one single *āyah* of comparable quality to those of the Qur'an.

In the early years of the Qur'an's worldly history, given the cultural reality of the Arabian people, the Qur'an was a fascinating, yet perplexing, expression of heretofore unknown and unfamiliar linguistic art. The Arabians prided themselves on their linguistic heritage. They were born poets, almost literally; their children grew up hearing and learning poetry, and expressing themselves poetically by instinct. But the Qur'an did not fit into their poetic patterns and their colloquial cadences. The Arabs were also familiar with prose, verse, liturgy and hymn, but the Qur'an did not fit into any of these familiar patterns either. This new, strange and wonderful form of expression bewildered them, and they confessed they were, utterly and unquestionably, unable to emulate it.

The books of *Sīrah* and *Sunnah* give us an interesting narration on this topic. One day Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, an opponent of Islam, heard the Prophet (ﷺ) reciting some *āyāt* and was apparently deeply affected. When Abū Jahl, another opponent of the Prophet (ﷺ), heard of this, he approached Al-Walīd with a bribe, trying to induce him to mock the literary and eloquent quality of the Qur'an. Al-Walīd's reply to Abū Jahl was that the Quraysh knew him to be one of its most wealthy people. Abū Jahl then tried to persuade him to publicly attack the Qur'an's quality. Al-Walīd answered, "But what can I say? No man is more familiar with poetry — its metrical structure, its verses, and even the poetry of the jinn — than me. But what he (Muhammad) says does not resemble any of that. I swear what he says is charming; it is blossom at the tip and nectar at the base. It is so towering it cannot be eclipsed. It demolishes all that is substandard to it." Abū Jahl told him that his folks would not accept such an assertion; they will only accept a repudiation of the Qur'an. After some thought, Al-Walīd said, "All this is mere spell-binding eloquence handed down [from olden times]."³⁵ It was on this occasion that Allah (ﷻ) revealed the *āyāt* in *Sūrah al-Muddaththir* beginning with, "Leave Me alone [to deal] with him whom I have created alone..." (74:11).

Indeed, the exquisitely superb Arabic of the Qur'an can only be fully appreciated by those who are familiar with the language. The *āyāt* come in a multiplicity of different styles; some are only a single word, or two or three words, others are several clauses and lines long. All have a particular tempo and rhythm; many are positively melodic. An abundant number of these *āyāt* stimulate human thought with their layers of meaning, while others have significance that appears to be beyond human grasp. The *āyāt* take the human on journeys that extend from the deepest of feelings to the broadest expanses of the intellect.

The Qur'an expresses Allah's (ﷻ) beautiful attributes, it dwells on the proclivities and inhibitions of human nature, it journeys from the smallest details of creation to the farthest horizons and vistas of the universe, to *sidrah al-muntahá* (the shades of infinity).³⁶ The Qur'an gives us wisdom, proverbs, and parables. It describes the Resurrection, the Judgement, the abode of the virtuous and the dwelling place of the vicious. There are accounts of historical figures, Prophets (ﷺ), and ancient civilizations, as well as injunctions pertaining to rituals, transactions, and what is lawful and what is not. In some *sūrah's*, such as *al-A'rāf*, *al-Shu'arā'* and *ṬāHā*, the Qur'an talks at length about the Prophets (ﷺ). In others, such as *al-Dhāriyāt*, *al-Najm*, *al-Qamar*, and *al-Fajr*, the stunning depth and weight of the *sūrah's*' meanings are emphasized by the simple brevity of their expression.

The fluency and eloquence of the Qur'an are part of its aesthetic beauty. The letters and the sounds that are combined to convey a divine meaning also contribute to its unique and inimitable wonder. What is also astonishing in the melodic cascade of *āyāt* is that sometimes the *āyāt* in a mainstream composition of meters are no longer in sync with the flow of the surrounding *āyāt*. Normally this would sound discordant, but in the music of the Qur'an it becomes part of a symphony that, when taken together, becomes the ultimate concert and chorus. The Qur'anic *āyāt*, vocalised with the correct pitch, tone and volume of the human voice, are as moving as any orchestra. The recitations of Muṣṭafá Ismā'íl, Muḥammad Ṣiddiq al-Minshāwī, and 'Abdu al-Bāsiṭ Muḥammad 'Abdu al-

Şamad in our past generation have moved Muslim crowds and audiences unlike any combination of musical instruments and singers of the decadent rock and roll and heavy metal cultures.

Another unique feature of the Qur'an is that it simultaneously and equally stimulates the mind and heart, the brain and the soul, the rational and the emotional, the mental and the sentimental, indeed every aspect of human consciousness, in a way that nothing else has proved capable of doing. It is because of this forceful address to the left and right sides of the brain, the heart and the soul that the Qur'an transcends the cultural ambience of peoples everywhere in the world. No earthly force can either interfere with or obstruct this balanced penetration of all elements and aspects of a human being. Thus emotionally deprived cultures are enriched with feelings; cultures that lack knowledge and science are enhanced with literacy, education, experience, and training. And more recently, cultures where the inhabitants are raised with two discordant personalities — the pull of an agnostic, self-aggrandizing materialism versus a stubborn Eastern universalism that will not go away — are given a harmonious equilibrium with Allah (ﷻ). The Qur'an can end what might be characterized as social schizophrenia and cultural inadequacy.

This Qur'an, which invites all and sundry to match it, and which was revealed by Allah (ﷻ) in the barren nomadic desert of Arabia over 14 centuries ago, also contains prophecies, predictions and news of the unknown. One of the revelations regarding the immediate future unfolding of affairs in the time of that first generation of Muslims was,

Defeated have been the Byzantines in the lands close-by; yet it is they who, notwithstanding this defeat shall be victorious within a few years: [for] with Allah rests all power of decision, first and last. And on that day will the committed Muslims [too, have cause to] rejoice in Allah's succor... (30:2–4).

These *āyāt* predicted the result of a military confrontation that was to happen a few years after their revelation, and sure enough, the Byzantines came back from their defeat to vanquish the Persians some years later. Another *āyah* that foretold coming events is

Indeed, Allah has shown the truth in His Apostle's true vision: most certainly shall you enter the inviolable *masjid*, if Allah so wills, in full security, with your heads shaved or your hair cut short, without any fear... (48:27).

These assurances regarding the Muslims' future success were revealed at a time when the Muslims were under intense pressure and keenly aware of their military weakness compared to their powerful enemies. For many who heard them, these *āyāt* must have appeared unbelievable; but for those with genuine faith in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), they offered inspiration beyond measure, as indeed they do to Muslims who read them even now, over 1,400 years later.

Then there are long-range predictions and forecasts for the distant future of Islam. Whatever the ups and downs of the Islamic condition, the Qur'an remains a beacon unto coming generations of devout and dedicated Muslims, and a warning to non-Muslims,

Allah has promised those of you who are committed to Him and do righteous work that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power on earth, even as He caused [some of those who lived before] to accede to it; and that, of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security — [seeing that] they conform to Me [alone], not associating other powers with Me... (24:55).

This prophecy of the committed Muslims inheriting the affairs of this world on a global level is still in the making. In order to reach a rank that qualifies them to supervise earthly society in light of Allah's

(ﷻ) inspiration and guidance, Muslims have to purge their minds and hearts of power-rivals they have confused with Allah (ﷻ).

A powerful salient feature of this literary and intellectually challenging Book is the fact that it is completely free of contradictions. Contrary to all intelligent human texts, which inevitably contain inconsistencies, inadequacies and incongruities, the Qur'an is entirely self-consistent. **"...Had it issued from any but Allah, they would surely have found in it many contradictions"** (4:82). Human writers, authors and composers constantly review their works, adding and deleting, updating and refining, and sometimes even rebuffering and refuting their own previous views. They also engage in vicious debates with each other, attacking and disparaging each other's works. Yet the Qur'an, revealed so long ago as a perfect text for all time, is above all such controversies. Of course, there are those individuals who have an axe to grind, who take issue with one or the other statement in the Qur'an. Many of these are missionaries or evangelists whose knowledge of the language of the Qur'an is substandard and who are biased against Islam. On the other hand, there have also been missionaries who, at the other extreme, cite the Qur'an to prove their own beliefs, in implicit recognition of its unique qualities and character. There have been committees and conclaves that have studied other religious texts and concluded that there are discrepancies and even fallacies in the Bible, but not so with the Qur'an.

The remarkable features of the Qur'an are innumerable. It miraculously blends the moral and the legal into one behavioral pattern, neither demanding nor tolerating in the individual or social human character any tension, which may result from an emphasis on either side at the expense of the other. The laws of the Qur'an, as they are presented, appear so moral, and the morality of the Qur'an, as it is presented, appears so legal that any attempt to drive a wedge between the two becomes superficial and alien to the word and the world of the divine Script. Furthermore, since the revelation of the Qur'an, over fourteen hundred years of subsequent human history have produced nothing in the way of experience or knowledge that renders any element of the Qur'an somehow obso-

lete or outdated. Every other book appears out of date or out of fashion, in style or content, within a few years, or at most a generation, of its writing and publication. Not so with the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the only piece of literature in the world that can be read and understood by a standard Arab, or anyone else who seeks to access its meanings, with a novelty and radiance bespeaking the clear understanding of the first generation, one thousand and four hundred years earlier.

As if all this is not enough, the Qur'an unveils facts that were yet to be intelligently understood by humans at the time of revelation. It, no doubt, also contains facts that are still not precisely understood, even with the accumulated knowledge gathered over the subsequent 1,400 years. Of course, the Qur'an does not dwell on such information, analyzing and explaining things in details as they might be presented in specialized books of mathematics or science. But in its universal address to the human experience, it repeatedly shows knowledge of the world, transcending any human understanding. In the process, it provides insight and discernment that engage the human intellect in areas of what have become known as scientific observations and theories.

Consider, for example, the words of the noble Qur'an before the microscope and telescope were invented, that is, before the scientific revolution and advent of the age of "enlightenment," **"And We charter (enact) the winds to fertilize [plants]..." (15:22).** How could this sentence be concocted by a human living a bedouin life in the desolate sands of a nomadic Arabia over a millennium ago? Plants, vegetation, and greenery are not part of the habitat into which this divine Script was revealed.

Are, then, they who are *kuffār* not aware that the cosmos and earth were [once] one single entity, which We then parted asunder? And [that] We made out of water every living thing? Will they not, then, [begin to] affirm [Our power]? (21:30).

Whatever scientific information we now have, or may obtain in the future, the creation of the universal system, as described by the Creator Himself in these words, relates to something like a rupture or a rift that rendered the earth, or the habitable part of the universe, physically separate from its stellar origins. Theoretical scientific explorations into the origin of the universe, which suggest a cataclysmic birth from the observed expansion of the universe, cosmic background radiation, abundance of the elements, and the laws of physics, are generally in congruence with the implications of the above *āyah*.

And He [it is Who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke (gas); and He [it is Who] said to them and to the earth, “Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly” — to which both respond, “We do come in obedience” (41:11).

This is another *āyah* that cannot possibly be produced even by today’s Arabians in the barren deserts of no-man’s-land, not to mention its marvellous composition in the Madinah of 1,400 years ago.

Other such *āyāt* of time-honored scientific meanings and explanations are

And of everything We have created a twosome... (51:49).

And it is He Who has spread the earth wide and placed on it stabilizing mountains and running waters, and eventuated thereon two sexes of every [kind of plant]... (13:3).

Limitless in His glory is He Who has created opposite genders in whatever the earth produces, and in their own [human] selves, and in that of which [as yet] they have no knowledge (36:36).

And the earth — We have diffused it, and placed on it

anchoring mountains, and caused [life] of every kind to grow on it in a balanced manner (14:18).

Ecology and the ecosystem are recent formulations of the scientific conscience. Not so with students of the Qur'an. The disturbance of the resilient yet delicate balance of Allah's (ﷻ) creation has opened the eyes of contemporary people to what is becoming an unquestionable relationship between man's tampering with this natural order and the natural catastrophes that occur in the world. Ecological instability has rendered the earth a restless planet as the result of a materialist civilization dominated by an uncontrolled and unrestrained military industrial complex. Storms and floods, volcanoes, droughts and famine, spreading fires, plague and pestilence, and changing weather patterns, are just some of the problems that have been brought to man's attention for many generations by this insightful Qur'an.

"...He cloaks the day with night, and He coats the night with day..." (39:5). The literary finesse of the *āyāt* of the Qur'an should not distract from the scientific facts that are enclosed in its words and phrases. Its extraordinary literary style apart, the Qur'an also appeals directly to the intellectual capacity with which the Creator has endowed the human mind.

And [they have a sign in] the Sun: it runs in an orbit of its own that is laid down by the Will of the Almighty, the All-Knowing; and [in] the Moon, for which We have determined phases [which it must traverse] till it becomes like an old date-stalk, dried-up and curved: [and] neither may the Sun overtake the Moon, nor can the night usurp the time of day, since all of them float through space [in accordance with Our laws] (36:38–40).

Many other *āyāt* also focus the mind and soul on the elaborate and meticulous construction of existence, the universe, life and other areas within the realm of human reasoning, understanding, and

analysis. All combined, this Qur'an is proof positive of its divine origin and of the integrity and authenticity of the Messenger (ﷺ) whose task it was to convey the words and purposes of this divine Text to friend and foe alike. Despite all the opposition faced by the Prophet (ﷺ), and with all the Arabian wordsmiths of the time determined to match the fabulous fabric of this literary masterwork, in the subsequent fourteen hundred years there have been no literary compositions that can be regarded as even approaching the Qur'an's remarkable qualities and character. To be sure, feeble improvisations like that of the impostor Musaylamah al-Kadhhab ("the liar") exist; however, the few lines are so pathetic that they only expose their producers as the frauds they really are.

The *mushriks* and Yahūd in Madinah were so upset with the Prophet (ﷺ) that they would seize every opportunity to diminish his esteem, stature, and moral standing. But we have to remember that this whole affair is a power issue. These Arabian men of letters felt impotent when they were publicly put on notice to come up with some text that could outdo or even match the Qur'an. They were unable to meet the challenge.

Their cultural and civilizational status, as much as they had invested oratorical and declamatory stocks into it throughout the ages, was also spineless vis-à-vis the reverberating and penetrating Qur'an. The noble Book was so strong and forceful that these erstwhile foes of the Prophet (ﷺ) shifted their wrath from the divine Scripture onto the person of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) himself.

They despised him because he was poor. He did not have an immediate power clan that could match their combined clannish forces. They began to think that if he were eliminated, then this Qur'an, which he is reciting and rehearsing, will be finished with him. In their inner power thoughts they figured that the Qur'an would be crippled if it were no longer quoted and presented by him. The power combination of the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ) was beyond their threshold of tolerance.

Or do they say, "[He is but] a poet; let us remonstrate what time will do unto him?" Say [O Muhammad],

“Remonstrate, [then,] hopefully; behold, I, too, shall hopefully reason against you!” (52:30–31).

And they would add, “Richer [than you] are we in wealth and in children, and [so] we are not going to be made to suffer!” (34:35).

These *mushriks* and *kuffār* were so desperate to discredit and destroy the beaming reality of the Qur’an that they turned to a ridiculous accusation. They accused the Prophet (ﷺ) of acquiring and learning this Qur’an from some monks or they insinuated that the Qur’an originated in a non-Arabian context. They latched on to the fact that he had travelled to Syria in a commercial caravan. He did travel to Syria with his uncle Abū Tālib when he was a child. Post-adolescence he went to Syria with Maysarah, the subaltern of Khadījah, when he was twenty-five years of age.

These two journeys were limited to a few weeks. This was certainly not enough time to learn how to put together such a book as the Qur’an with all its wisdom, laws, historical facts, scientific references, and then prophecies, predictions, along with injunctions and instructions that were Makkah- and Madinah-specific. These could not have been “prefabricated” somewhere in Syria. With the combination of the compelling content, the unique style, the overall dazzling diction, and the elaborate enunciation, it becomes clear that these feats are beyond the mortal capacity of Muhammad (ﷺ).

Then the *mushrik-kāfir* argument turned so absurd that they said some Roman blacksmith whose trade was to make and sell swords in Makkah inspired and taught the Prophet (ﷺ). To this the Qur’an replies,

And, indeed, full well do We know that they say, “It is but a human being that imparts [all] this to him!” [Notwithstanding that] the tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is foreign, whereas this is Arabic speech, clear [in itself] and clearly showing the truth [of its source] (16:103).

Other such nonsense was churned out by the propaganda stalwarts of Arabia who tried to say that Salmān al-Fārsī (the Persian) who had some knowledge of religions was endowing the Prophet (ﷺ) with the Qur'an. Salmān came to Islam in Madinah. Most of the Qur'an was revealed in Makkah. How could they make such an allegation? But it shows how irrational and clumsy the adversaries of Islam become when they concoct any statement to besmirch and defame the Qur'an, the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) and Islam.

And the *āyāt* go on to say to these *kuffār*: if you cannot compose a *sūrah* similar to one from the Qur'an, and you most certainly and emphatically will never be able to come up with anything remotely akin to it, then you *kuffār* should guard yourselves against the fire that is fuelled by social beings and by stones. These mortal humans do not have it within their capacity to acknowledge that the source of this noble Book is Allah (ﷻ), and they cannot submit to this fact by guarding against the power of Allah (ﷻ). Given the influential positions they hold amongst their people, when they fail to accept the absolute power position of Allah (ﷻ), they hurt not only themselves but their societies at large. Thus, as they obstruct divine light from illuminating their hearts, and as they obstruct the Qur'an from shaping their minds and souls, they also obstruct the Prophet's (ﷺ) divine character from impacting their society. For this, their final destination is the Fire. This fire could be one in the life to come but it could also be the raging fire in their bellies that kindles their "superiority complex." It consumes them in its flames along with all their physical and material environment, their bricks and buildings, their jewels and gems, as well as their structures and stones. It is not too late for them, though, to guard against the fire that anticipates and awaits them.

Immaculate Mates for Both Male and Female

But unto those who affirm Allah [as a power and authority] and do what is right, give them good news: theirs shall be gardens with flowing rivers. Whenever

they are given fruits therefrom as their nourishment, they will say, “It is this, that in times past, we were provided!” For they will be given something that will resemble [what they were given in] that past. And there they shall have immaculate mates, and there they shall dwell forever (2:25).

The Qur’an now transfers us to the ultimate destiny — Paradise — where all of man’s myriad notions of appetite are satisfied with an exuberance, fervor and passion. The fruits (the word *fruit* is the only way to express this element of Paradise as it comes closest to what our worldly experience has to offer) look familiar, but once sampled and tasted, they are obviously far beyond our sensual memory of what they were like on earth. The human sexual yearning and passion is released into a pristine virginal and virtuous copulation. The *āyah* refers specifically to the fact that those (males and females) who are firmly committed to Allah’s (ﷻ) power and authority in this world and then do His Will by righteous worldly behavior shall look forward to this chaste and faultless intimacy in the world and life to come.

The address, “*Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū*” (O You who are divinely committed!) which is so prevalent in the Qur’an is inclusive of both men and women. The Arabic wording, though, in a literal sense, is addressing men only. Otherwise, the address to women would have been “*Yā āyyuhā al-lātī āmanna,*” but, as is standard in the Arabic Qur’anic phraseology, the term “*Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū*” applies to both gentlemen and ladies alike.

Therefore, as an example, the *āyah* in the Qur’an that outlines the obligation of fasting (which is compulsory by consensus upon both genders) says so by stating “*Yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū*” with the inclusive male pronouns. And so in *āyah* 2:25, when Allah (ﷻ) gives good news to *al-ladhīna āmanū*, He is also including girls, ladies, and women. And thus, when He promises them sexual companions of purity and honor, He is promising all those who were included in His address: masculine and feminine. So just like men will, in the eternal life to come, have wives of pristine aroma and

venerated virginity, likewise, all women, in the eternal life to come, will have husbands of pristine aroma and perfect purity.

At this point, this humble writer encounters an obvious male bias in the interpretation of this *āyah*. In the many *tafsirs* that are being reviewed and consulted in the course of this analysis of Qur’anic meanings, all of them without exception have interpreted this *āyah* to mean that men shall have pure wives. No mention is made about women who shall have pure husbands. The word *azwāj* in Arabic, the plural of *zawj* meaning mate or spouse, signifies either gender: the masculine or the feminine. Still, however, no *tafsir* encountered by this writer has mentioned that women also will have their inviolate or unblemished mates.

To some people this may seem like a trivial matter. They may consider it a simple oversight with no chauvinistic intentions; also there is always room for addenda and corrections. To other people, especially some feminists, this is no simple mistake; for them it shows how eccentric men are when they interpret the Qur’an. And it needs more than just an appendix citation to set things straight.

In a sense, both arguments contain elements of truth. In describing a woman’s state of purity in the *ākhirah* some commentators have said that the heavenly female companions of men are clean of foul matter, filth, menstrual periods, postpartum period, urine, and feces. Of course, both sexes in the life of eternity are free of these earthly characteristics. But the mind cannot ignore the fact that there is a discrepancy here in the way the traditional commentators have spoken about one sex, the female, and not in the same way about the other, the male.

Given the highly sensitive nature of breaching details of this whole subject on the part of Islamic scholars, it would have behooved them to similarly describe the foul or nefarious characteristics of men rather than only of women. Would it not have been for the peculiar gender feuding that is taking place in our modern, “civilized” world, this would not have been a matter of great concern and it would not have been redressed in this way. However, it is precisely this type of dereliction or fault that is pounced upon by those who could care less either for Muslim women or men, and by

those who would morph this into an intra-Islamic polarization between Muslim men and women. Some women coming out of a traditional or reactionary quarter in the Muslim world put on their verbal fighting gear and begin to launch their visceral salvos against Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet (ﷺ). This is no time for feminist throwback tempers, backlashes, bad moods, or regressive rages; the constructive thing to do is to have qualified Muslim women step up to the plate and bat.

In other words, it is the duty of Muslim women to engage their minds in the meanings of this Sanctified Book. Of course, it is a sad commentary that few are the Muslim women who became *faqīhs*, scholars, 'alims, and Islamic intellectuals. But we cannot indulge in finicky faultfinding overkill. Now is the time to do something about it. We all have to pick up the pieces, and move along in a mutually-caring way, which becomes part of the overall divine program of doing the right thing. Let us not curse the dark; let us light a candle.

The last *āyah* above is a caption from heaven reserved for those who bind to the power of Allah (ﷻ) and rely only on Him, do what is virtuous, and are occupied with a faith that is translated into action. If *taqwá*, the power relationship with Allah (ﷻ), is missing, it can be regained. If social humans are void of this power pulse with Allah (ﷻ), they can reclaim it by making a mental and conscious decision to acclimate and conform to Allah (ﷻ), the Power. If they place themselves in a junior position while fervently holding to Allah (ﷻ) as Sustainer, then there is hope for acquiring *taqwá*. Keep in mind that these are Madinan *āyāt* issued at a time when Yahūd and their minions were trying to disprove and bring into question the whole Muhammadi and Qur'anic mission. The committed Muslims' source of fortitude and power, Allah (ﷻ), was also the object of Yahūd's derision and contempt.

This is not a remote historical lesson typed onto the pages of the Qur'an. It is one that we are living in our age and time. Even though not much is said about the Qur'an (the enemies fear it may ricochet on them), the Yahūdī power centers do make fun of Muslims who affirm that Allah (ﷻ) is their source of power and

their ultimate line of defense. Yahūd such as Steven Emerson, Judith Miller, and Khalid Duran, in North America, as well as their counterparts around the world who are working in tandem with the 20th-century reincarnation of Banū al-Naḍīr, Qaynuqā‘, and Qurayzah, are consumed in a broad campaign to devalue the Qur’an.³⁷ Concurrently, they aim to disfigure the image of the Prophet (ﷺ) as a statesman, military commander, and a civic decision-maker, and malign all the Islamic reassertion movements whose base of support is Allah (ﷻ) and only Allah (ﷻ). These campaigns did not deter the confident Muslims then, and these campaigns will not deter the confident Muslims today, *inshā’allāh*.

What It Means to Be a *Fāsiq*

- Behold, Allah does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that. Now, as for those who are committed [to Allah], they know that it is the truth from their Sustainer — whereas those who are bent on denying the truth say, “What could Allah mean by this parable?” In this way does He cause many a one to go astray, just as He guides many a one aright: but none does He cause thereby to go astray save the degenerates.
- Who break their bond with Allah after it has been consolidated [in their nature], and cut asunder what Allah has deemed to be integrated; and spread corruption on earth: these it is that shall be the losers.
- How can you refuse to acknowledge Allah, seeing that you were lifeless and He gave you life, and that He will cause you to die and then He will bring you again to life, whereupon unto Him you will be brought back?
- He it is Who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens; and He alone has full knowledge of everything (al-Baqarah:26–29).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي ۚ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا
 الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا ۖ يُضِلُّ بِهِ
 كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ ۖ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ ۚ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾
 الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ ۖ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۚ
 أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾
 كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ
 ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي
 الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ
 وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

The first *āyah* in this thematic cluster of *āyāt*, “Behold, Allah does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat...” was revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in a real down-to-earth milieu of human affairs, entangled with the vicissitudes of human nature. For the first time in human history, a heavenly book was penetrating the mind and the soul together to be accepted, experienced, and assimilated by that hitherto nomadic human presence in Arabia. These scriptural words from heaven included references to flies, bees, spiders, etc. This tempted the *mushriks* and Yahūd to ask, “Well, if this Qur’an and these *āyāt* are from Allah (ﷻ), the Supreme and the Superior,

why is He then fiddling with words about pittance and smidgens such as flies, ants, bees and spiders?” It is this real Yahūdī sarcasm and mocking of Allah (ﷻ) that received its answer from heaven above, **“Certainly, Allah is not ashamed of propounding a parable of a punkie...”** Yahūd wanted everyone to believe that God is not so frivolous as to reveal holy verses of scripture that mention such trivial things as flies and ants or, maybe, rodents and insects! The mouthpieces and the loudmouths of the Yahūdī propaganda network would craft the kind of arguments that would give the following bottom line impression to the public: Isn’t the Lord of Muhammad (ﷺ) ashamed of coining similitudes or analogies of bugs and flees?

There are *sūrah*s in the Qur’an — *Sūrah al-Nahl* (the Bee), *Sūrah al-Ankabūt* (the Spider), *Sūrah al-Naml* (the Ant) — all of which could become a public relations and propaganda heyday for the Yahūdī distorters/distracters. Such is the problem with the Yahūdī mind. If Allah (ﷻ), out of His mercy, love and care, effects an analogy for us humans to understand and connect with, which in this case means some forms of elementary life whose observation is shared by the entire human race, what gives Yahūd the license to jump in and say, “But the majesty of God does not stoop to such a level as to be speaking about pests and nuisances! These cannot be God’s words.” And then if God should speak of facts beyond human rational conception then He would be accused by the same sources as a God who is ambiguous, unintelligible, and incomprehensible! It is this mentality that was addressed by this *āyah*, **“Indeed, Allah does not hesitate to present an analogy of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that.”**

There are two divergent reactions among people as they relate to Allah’s (ﷻ) comparisons and metaphors. There are those who realize that they are authentic, true, and validated by Allah (ﷻ). These are the people who are committed to Allah (ﷻ) and their relationship with Him is one of grace, courtesy, and manners. Any comparison or contrast coined by Allah (ﷻ) as a simile or a symbol is meant to guide man and endear him to Allah (ﷻ). The same metaphor, however, causes other people to deviate and dissent from

Allah (ﷻ). Their cozy relationship with their own egos wants to judge God as a trivial deity if He chooses to dabble in such matters! An act of God, words of scripture, a parable approximating meanings to the human mind, all this becomes a source of inspiration for some (the divinely committed) and an opportunity of mockery for others (the deniers of divine deliberation and discretion). It is the compassionate commitment to Allah (ﷻ) that becomes the guiding light for some, and it is the erroneous assumptions of some others that take them on tangents away from Allah (ﷻ). They digress, they deviate, and they are devalued. Why? The straight and simple answer is that they are *fāsiqs*.

But who is a *fāsiq*? He is one whose human nature has been detached from Allah's (ﷻ) instructions. In the human-to-divine relationship there is a human inclination and propensity to cling to Allah's (ﷻ) counsel and command. This is a core human relationship with Allah (ﷻ). It is a psychological and biological dependency on Allah (ﷻ). Our crux and climax of existence is contingent upon this inherent and native relationship with Allah (ﷻ). When man drifts away from this intrinsic relationship he parts company with Allah (ﷻ) on this essential level and becomes a *fāsiq*. Like most of the verbs in the Arabic language that begin with the letter *fā'*, the root word *fasaqa* denotes an act of *breaking away*. In this case, it means breaking away from Allah's (ﷻ) directives and direction. And how is this done, one may ask? The *āyah* replies,

[They] break their bond with Allah after it has been established [in their nature], and [they] cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined, and [they] spread corruption on earth: these it is that shall be the losers (2:27).

In other words, the relationship with Allah (ﷻ) that is the focus of human activity has disintegrated.

These types of humans dissolve, decompose, and disband the relationships nurtured through the divine medium of Prophets (ﷺ) and scriptures. Then they go on to the second level of their collective existence and they spew havoc into all regions of the world.

When this human relationship with Allah (ﷻ) comes apart at the core, whether it happens with the obstinate Yahūdī sages, or with the *munāfiqs* and *kuffār*, it eventually leads to instability on earth.

It should be noted here that this “break with Allah (ﷻ)” (*fusūq*) takes place almost at an instinctual level. This occurs before the rational component of *kufr* is added to it. Once man is existentially alienated from Allah (ﷻ) through the initial breach or rift (*fusūq*), he then begins to give his life a meaning by explaining his purpose for existence in a program of seemingly logical and intelligent interpretations. For instance, there are those agnostic ideological formulations which start with the premise that man’s nature, like that of the mammals at the top of the food chain, is essentially predatory, meaning that predation is necessary for survival. And thus, when man coalesces into societies, those with the strongest predatory, exclusivist and exclusionary instinct will be naturally selected to perform the “important” social functions such as ruling, defending, and managing wealth. Over the past few centuries, philosophers, social scientists, academics, politicians, princes, and generals have incrementally formalized these foundations into the rapacious systems which dominate man’s communal life today: capitalism, communism, socialism, etc. All put together, this becomes the paradigm of *kufr*.

Man may also “break with Allah (ﷻ)” at the core level, but may still be an apparent Muslim. The question then becomes: what is the difference between a *fāsiq* and a *munāfiq*? The quick answer is that although both share many of the same characteristics, they are distinguished based upon the frame of reference.

As we follow through the *āyāt* of the Qur’an we shall grow more familiar with the fine line that distinguishes a company of *fāsiqs* from the contingent of *munāfiqs*. The latter work their opportunistic pursuits as they relate to power and power politics. No matter what people do, social forces are always at work. That is to say, committed Muslims with a power centre, which is opposed by the established forces of *kufr*, generate a stratum in society known as *munāfiqs*. In this sense, *munāfiqs* are breakaway *kuffār* who calculate that their best interest is achieved when they join the growing

social, political, and military force of Islam before it is too late. Such was the case with the *munāfiqs* at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and at all times when dedicated and committed Muslims are in their state-building and power consolidating phase.

On the other hand, *fāsiqs* are those who are not very much defined by power politics, power, or force as much as they are by their core attachment to Allah (ﷻ). They may not even know where they stand on the issue until the time comes and they are put to the test, as was the case with the followers of Mūsá (ﷺ). They probably did not realize they were *fāsiqs* until they came to face the enemy in a military confrontation and realized that their core relationship with Allah (ﷻ) was not there, “**Prayed [Mūsá], ‘O my Sustainer! Of none am I master but of myself and my brother [Hārūn]; draw Thou, then, a dividing-line between us and these *fāsiq* folks’**” (5:25).

The *munāfiqs* are more concerned with the social power struggle and overtly want to be with the winning Muslims but covertly and in reality, they are with the losing *mushriks*. The *fāsiqs*, on the other hand, are more concerned with the psychological leisure of breaking with Allah’s (ﷻ) commands and orders whenever it is convenient to do so. These indicative features of the *munāfiqs* and the *fāsiqs* are not exclusive of each other. And hence,

The *munāfiqs*, both men and women, are all of a kind: they legitimize what is wrong and delegitimize what is right, and withhold their hands [from doing good]. They are oblivious of Allah, and so He is oblivious of them. Verily, the *munāfiqs* — it is they, they who are truly *fāsiqs*” (9:67).

There is an authentic hadith in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* by way of ‘Ā’ishah, that Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said (and the use of the word *fāsiq* in this hadith refers to the unruly, wayward, and disruptive behavior at the pulse level of the identified creatures), “*The fāsiqs [animals] are to be eliminated [killed] in sanctified and non-sanctified time and place zones [al-ḥill wa al-ḥarām]: a raven, a*

hida'ah (a certain noxious bird), a scorpion, a rat, and a rabid and mad dog.”³⁸ The instinctual functions of these creatures earned them the word *fāsiq* because they have a common denominator: their visceral “break” with their domain and habitat. Those humans who, likewise, break with divine relationship at an intuitive level also incur the *fāsiq* description. Hence, the *āyah* indicates that these *fāsiqs* break with all that Allah (ﷻ) has instructed to be consolidated. They sever their identification relationship with the Apostles of Allah (ﷺ) and they estrange the Apostles (ﷺ) from each other by discriminating among them; they dissolve their bond with fellow committed Muslims; and they break off ties with family (*qaṭ‘u al-arḥām*, which is literally, breach of the womb).

With this in mind, any *kāfir* or *munāfiq* may be decoded as a *fāsiq*. In the case of the *kāfir*, his conviction of breaking away from Allah (ﷻ) leads to the formulation of an ideology and concept contrary to the system of life endorsed by Allah (ﷻ). In the case of the *munāfiq*, his obsession with power alliances has displaced his kernel allegiance to Allah (ﷻ) in such a way that he, also at his core, has broken away from firm commitment to Allah (ﷻ). The convergence of it all is epitomized by pre-satanic Iblīs (Lucifer), “He [Iblīs] was one of those incognito; hence, he broke away from His Sustainer’s command...” (18:50).

Wayward Ideologies Originate from Denying Allah (ﷻ)

How do you deny Allah, knowing that you were lifeless and He gave you life, and that He will cause you to die and then He will bring you again to life, whereupon unto Him you will be brought back? He it is who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens; and He alone has full knowledge of everything (2:28–29).

How do you refuse to acknowledge Allah (ﷻ)? This is not a rhetorical question. It is one that goes to the centre of man's thoughts and behavior. How does man dismiss Allah (ﷻ)? How does man take issue with Allah (ﷻ)? And how does man formulate elaborate ideas and modern ideologies that cancel Allah (ﷻ) for all practical purposes? This *āyah* concedes the fact that man is capable of forging together a paradigm that excludes Allah (ﷻ) from being the only and the primary source of authority and influence in man's mental capacity and pursuit. That is what *kufr* is all about. *Kufr* is that copious body of literature, commendations, and suggestions that eclipse or obscure the divine Fact: Allah (ﷻ). The surprising part of this human entanglement with *kufr* is that man in his modernistic expression of social norms always diminishes or dismisses the fact that Allah (ﷻ) gives life and death.

The system of *kufr* unfailingly engineers a mass psychology that is shared by all, or almost all its human subjects. This mass psychology does not think about, contemplate, anticipate or envision inevitable death. In this engineered spirit of *kufr*, no one wants to be reminded of death. The *āyah* says man was dead, then he was given life, then he dies again, then he is given life once again as he reverts to Allah (ﷻ). Are there any individuals from the upscale Western modernity and its extensions throughout the world who would occasionally discuss the issue of death? Not likely. Even the funeral homes, the mortuaries and the cemeteries are not very obvious as one travels the lands of this civilization of *kufr*. It may also be noted that synagogues are not obvious to an observer. This is not an idle observation; it is reflective of a modern social ambiance in which the Yahūdī presence and culture flourishes in the world it dominates. Despite its Abrahamic roots, this is a culture that has no moral or spiritual anchor. Naturally therefore, its entertainment centers and armament silos, the true monuments of its materialistic and militaristic culture, are engineering marvels for all to see and admire, while its spiritual edifices are nondescript and barely noticeable.

In point of truth, people deny Allah (ﷻ) by dint of the *kufr* system that facilitates the exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) from mind, heart, and practical life. This tells us something about the quality

of these human beings who do not want to mention death, who do not want to discuss it, and who have a system that conveniently helps them *shut down* or *tune off* whenever death is the subject.

These are disjointed humans as their bodies approach death every day and year of their lives while their minds avoid, depart and retreat from the idea of death every day and year of their lives. The physical body is moving in one direction — towards death — and the mental awareness is moving in the opposite direction — away from death. When death does arrive, and it certainly will, their transition to the coming life shall be dysfunctional at best!

It should be clear that only Western civilization in our contemporary world came up with a “rational” atheism. Bear in mind that Marxism-Leninism, which for several generations in the past century was the watchtower of intellectual drifters, is a mental secretion of the same Western civilization that sought to give credibility and popularity to the offending notion of a material world that has no God. It is remarkable to note that this “reality-void-of-God” ideology gripped the imagination of intellectuals in the 20th century of the Church. It originated in the hub of Western civilization and from there it spread its tentacles into the far corners of the world. When the contemporary mind-set that denies the Deity is traced to its provenance, it points more to Europe than to any other place on earth.

Atheism was to be found in ancient Greece, where Leucippus and Democritus taught that the final reality is “atoms and the void.” From ancient Greece to modern America, atheism has always found mental breeding grounds in all societies that have European origins or that have suffered under European occupation. Atheism itself has many denominations, even though they may not be known by this name. It is almost a “rule of thumb” among the Western-educated classes to treat the world of nature as a self-regulating system to be explained on immanentist (inherent, innate) principles. This point of view has seeped into the mental structures of non-Western elites and societies as well. Due to the dominant power-position of Western scientific-materialistic civilization, the general public mentality across much of the world has been shaped

by educational systems rooted in Western values and the global impact of Hollywood. This mentality takes it for granted that if there is a function for God, it cannot be that of a *deus ex machina* called in to explain some recondite (abstract and cryptic) phenomena of nature.

The mentality and mind-set that denies God, in the context of Western civilization, ventured into the area of “religion.” In the last century, it began to explain God as a projection of human ideals or even of the human father, as Feuerbach and Freud argued. Marx and his followers demoted “religion” to a by-product of social and economic conditions. This developing paradigm of *kufir* held that the idea of a transcendent God was an obstacle to human freedom and transcendence. Nietzsche and Sartre expanded on this, pointing out that the human condition had been improved by science and human effort rather than by reliance on God.

These intellectual arguments are the fibre and fabric of *kufir* as they combine with certain emotional feelings of rebellion against God. For some, the sheer evil and injustice of much that goes on in the world seemed a disproof of God’s existence and one Albert Camus even called for constructs against God’s existence. Some of their spoken minds found God’s existence incompatible with the way they observed facts; others proffered arguments suggesting God does not exist because the concept of God is incoherent or confused. Still others criticized the proofs offered for God’s existence. All of these mental musings have been produced by tainted philosophers, disingenuous ideologues, and opportunistic secularists — the weavers of *kufir*.

One of the most influential and powerful “proofs” that there is no God proceeds from *The Problem From Evil*. This argument claims that the following three statements cannot all be simultaneously true: (1) evil exists; (2) God is omnipotent; and (3) God is all-loving. The argument goes as follows,

- if God can prevent evil, but does not, then He is not all-loving.
- if God intends to prevent evil but cannot, then He is not omnipotent.

- if God both intends to prevent evil and is capable of doing so, then how can evil exist?

Another argument claims that the existence of an all-knowing God is incompatible with the fact of free will — that humans do make independent choices. If God is omniscient, He must know beforehand exactly what a person will do in a given situation. In that case, a person is not, in fact, free to do the alternative to what God knows he or she will do, and hence free will must be an illusion. Through the twists and turns of these tormented temperaments and trends, none of these ideologues of *kufr* could give an answer to Allah's (ﷻ) question, **“How do you deny [the practical and power existence of Allah], knowing that you were lifeless, then He spirited you, then He will terminate you, then He will resurrect you, and then you will all revert to Him?”** If a philosopher or pundit wants to deny the reality of Allah (ﷻ) he should be able to explain to his audience how life is generated and how it ends? How did man come into existence and what are the variables that eventually detach his vital presence from this existence? So far, and probably forever, there will only be partial and insufficient answers to this Qur'anic question. It is not enough to go through scientifically descriptive data about life, which do not give us a satisfactory answer as to what or who makes or evolves life and death? It is not enough to say that life is the condition that distinguishes organisms from inorganic objects and dead organisms. If life is being constantly manifested by growth involving metabolism, reproduction, and the power of adaptation to environment through changes originating internally, then how is it possible to turn around and deny the existence of life's Originator?

There are massive amounts of cosmic and cellular formulae that cooperate and affiliate to make human life possible. The complexities and intricacies of these formulae combined leave no doubt in the intelligent mind that there has to be a Superior intellect, a Supreme realization, and a Singular power that is capable of calibrating both life and death with all the physical and non-physical coordinates of both. It is time for man to emerge from under the clutter and confusion of information that he has in his possession

and acknowledge the undeniable Deity and Divinity: Allah Almighty (ﷻ). Man, for a period of time, may bemuse himself with inventions and discoveries. He may toy around with theories of evolution, genetic engineering, mind-body interactions, warding off natural hazards, aging and immortality, alternative medicine, mood control, and other discoveries, devices, and designs. But they all remain descriptive and they are all short of the act of creation — an act affiliated with Allah (ﷻ) and only with Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, it behooves a thinking man to ponder and probe the reality of life and death. Only when a petty and scanty amount of information and “science” goes to the ego instead of the brain, man can make the casuistic claim that God does not exist and then place that claim in a larger argument he fancies as an ideology!

He it is who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens; and He alone has full knowledge of everything (2:29).

After the preceding *āyah* (2:28) asks, “How do you defy Allah...?” this following *āyah* rejoins with “He it is who has created for you all that is on earth...” Even though man questions the power presence of Allah (ﷻ) to the degree of denying Him, Allah (ﷻ) reproaches man out of His love and mercy, saying to him and reminding him of the fact that He is the One who has created for him all that is on earth. In other words, Allah (ﷻ) is penetrating man’s contention and He is evoking the fact that even when man rides his ego and takes issue with Allah (ﷻ), it is still Allah (ﷻ) who has created for this man, from time immemorial until the end of time, all that is on earth.

One must consider that everything on this planet, and wherever therein man adopts as a habitat, was created by the One Creator for man. It is a singular honor for him. Everything was created for man to consider, know, use, utilize, tap into, benefit from, and manage in the best and most rewarding way. The word *created* in the above *āyah* is a notice to man who cannot create. It strong-

ly suggests the power disparity between man and Allah (ﷻ). Allah (ﷻ) creates and man cannot.

“Allah has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens.” The *āyah* is clear as it explains that Allah (ﷻ) has, in His dimension of things, modeled the heavens into seven heavens. The word *seven* has a literary meaning for *several*, which is common in the Semitic languages; it also literally represents the numeral 7, the number following the numeral 6. It is left up to the maturation of the human mind and its scientific investigations and progress to determine what is exactly meant by the word *seven* in the above *āyah*.

With all the scientific data available to humans today, they still are unable to determine in a positive and irrefutable way the precise meaning of *seven* in the *āyah* above. Even the Qur’anic definition of the word *samā’*, which can be variously translated as Space, cosmos, galaxy, universe, biosphere, macrocosm, heaven, and sky, cannot be fine-tuned by the “tremendous leaps and bounds” of contemporary astronomy, physics, geography, and technology. Man cannot satisfactorily define the word *samā’* but he insists on developing arguments that cancel God from existence.

With Hubble Space telescopes, with space launches, and with satellites in orbit, man’s probe from one horizon to the next has not defined, as of yet, the canopy meaning of the Qur’anic word *samā’* (plural, *samāwāt*). Man may have the necessary information but he does not have the necessary synchronization between probing the Qur’an and examining the universe. Ever since human beings first turned their heads skyward and gazed with curiosity at the stars, the mysteries of the universe have held a special fascination. Today, astronomy is a billion-dollar science. An array of special instruments including optical, infrared and radio telescopes, satellites sensitive to X-rays, and underground neutrino detectors peer into the depths of space, gathering information about the most far-flung objects in the cosmos. Already, this observing power takes astronomers to the so-called *edge* of the observable universe.

The idea of an edge may be misleading. There is no suggestion that the universe has any sort of boundary. That *edge* may be the

delineating line between one *samā'* and the next. Indeed, this process may well extend into infinity. Of more significance is the fact that the light (and radio) waves, whereby astronomers observe the distant regions of the cosmos, travel at a finite speed, so a telescope is also a *timescope*. These nether regions are seen as they were billions of years ago when the light was emitted. Vital clues about the primeval phase will come from advances in high-energy particle physics. Impressive though this seems, many theorists are interested in events at still earlier moments. It is probable that the basic structure of the cosmos, as well as its contents, was laid down even before the first million-trillion-trillionth of a second had elapsed. From Sputnik 1 to the Moon landings, exploring the planets, telescopes, space stations, industrialization of space, permanent colonies in Earth orbit, bases on planets, and other economic incentives for new projects in space, Western man is still incapable of engaging in space exploration without colonial objectives.

Some information of scientific relevance does indicate that the further mankind goes in probing the distances of Space, the more it becomes involved with a process of penetrating the dimension of time. In this particular context with the narration of Adam and Eve (ﷺ), Allah (ﷻ) takes humanity from its thoughts on Space to its thoughts on creation at the inception of human life.

This is the discourse that follows immediately in the Qur'an. But before leaving the ever-expanding human understanding of the *samāwāt* and before entering into the realm of positive information about human origins, Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And He alone has full knowledge of everything.”** When man realizes that he is relatively ignorant of Space — despite all his discoveries and probes — and when man realizes that he is relatively ignorant of his own origins — despite all his speculations about the origins of life — and when both these relative ignorances converge, Allah (ﷻ) says to this thinking but knowledge-lacking human, **“And He alone has full knowledge of everything.”** Related from al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī is the following quote, which places the power configuration of things in perspective,

When Allah (ﷻ) created the earth it was in a state of flux. When Allah's (ﷻ) angels saw the state it was in they said, "Lord! This earth cannot be settled by creatures (created beings)." Thence, He anchored the earth with mountains. When Allah's (ﷻ) angels saw what earth was anchored with they asked, "Lord! Have you created anything more cogent (forceful) than the mountains?" He said, "Yes, iron." They asked, "Lord! Have you created anything stronger than iron?" He said, "Yes, fire." They asked again, "Lord! Have you created anything more fervent and forceful than fire?" He said, "Yes, water." They continued, "Lord! Have you created anything more forceful than water?" The Lord replied, "Yes, the wind." They went on, "Lord! Have you created anything more forceful than the wind?" And He replied, "Yes, the descendant of Ādam."³⁹

This stands the materialistic mindset on its head. It also places man, the human man, in a position of empowerment, thereby qualifying him to become Allah's (ﷻ) heir on earth.

Man Is Created for an Important Role

- **And Lo! Your Sustainer said unto the angels, "Behold, I am about to render on earth a *khalīfah* (successor)." They said, "Will You place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood; whereas it is we who extol Your limitless glory, and praise You, and hallow Your name?" [Allah] answered, "Verily, I know that which you do not know."**
- **And He imparted unto Ādam the names of all things; and then He exhibited them to the angels and said, "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true."**
- **They replied, "Limitless are You in Your glory! No knowledge have we save that which You have imparted unto us. Verily, You alone are All-Knowing, Truly Wise."**

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۗ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ يَتَادُمُ أَنْبِئْتَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَقُلْنَا يَتَادُمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَلَقَىٰ ءَادَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾ قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ

يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ

فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

- Said He, “O Ādam, convey unto them the names of these [things].” As soon as [Ādam] had conveyed unto them their names, [Allah] said, “Did I not say unto you, verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal?”
- And when We told the angels, “Prostrate yourselves before Ādam!” they all prostrated themselves, except Iblīs, who refused and gloried in his arrogance, and thus he became of the *kuffār*.
- And We said, “O Ādam, dwell you and your wife in the garden, and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest you become offenders.”
- But Shayṭān swayed them both therein, and thus ousted them from their erstwhile state. And so We said, “Down with you, [to become henceforth] enemies unto one another; and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!”
- Thereupon Ādam received words [of guidance] from his Sustainer, and He accepted his repentance: for, verily, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.
- [For although] We did say, “Down with you all from this [state],” there shall, nonetheless, most certainly come unto you guidance from Me, and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.
- But those who are bent on denying [Me] and giving the lie to Our message, they are destined for the fire, and therein they shall abide forever (al-Baqarah:30–39).

This cluster of *āyāt*, an independent lesson, could be considered a timely follow-up to the eternal classification of people: the *muttaqīs*, the *kufr* crowd, and the nebulous and nefarious mobs of *munāfiqs*. It is important to note that Allah (ﷻ), the Magnanimous and the Majestic, chose to tell us humans of this pre-human conversation. Besides Himself, the exchange included the angels, Iblīs, and then Adam and Eve (ﷺ) after they were brought about and effected as Allah's (ﷻ) beneficiaries of the earth.

Obviously, Allah (ﷻ) did not give us this information so that we close our minds and lock our brains. He had enough confidence in our ability to reason and think that He divulged to us a part of history and existence, to which we would otherwise have no access. It is Allah (ﷻ) who is nurturing our confidence in ourselves and our ability to think and reason when some of us have no confidence whatsoever in our human abilities, our range of understanding pertinent information, our reasoning, our analyzing, and our making sense out of events. Had this type of information been out of intellectual bounds, Allah (ﷻ) would not have advanced it for our faculty of thought. And to ease the meanings into our realm of understanding this whole narration has been couched in a “short story” form.

With enough confidence in our mental capacity and knowing that the Qur'an is for people who think, we who read the Qur'an for guidance should realize that there is a caveat pertaining to this particular lesson about Allah (ﷻ), the angels, Iblīs, and our common father and mother — Adam and Eve (ﷺ). We are cautioned that these *āyāt* are *mutashābihāt* (allegorical or suggestive and evocative). This means that the surface meanings of the *āyāt* are not exhaustive of the core-to-detail facts. Let us now enter into the realm of these *āyāt* and behave as rational subjects of Allah (ﷻ).

And lo! Your Sustainer said unto the angels, “Behold, I am about to render on earth a *khalīfah*.” They said, “Will You place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood; whereas it is we who extol Your limitless glory, and praise You, and hallow Your name?” (2:30).

The first thing to clarify in understanding this *āyah* is that Allah (ﷻ) in His address to the angels was not consulting them. His knowledge is infinite and He needs no advice from anyone, angels or humans. The angels' reply, **“Will You place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood...,”** is not to be construed as a quarrel or argument with Allah (ﷻ). By expressing their thoughts, the angels were not objecting to Allah's (ﷻ) will of having a successor on earth. A feud between Allah (ﷻ) and the angels does not behoove Allah (ﷻ) nor is it appropriate for the angels. This mental twist, which could be found in the Yahūdī interpretation of scripture,⁴⁰ has no explanation in the Islamic morality of thought. Angels are not created to bicker or quibble with Allah (ﷻ), their Creator and Sustainer. Angels, in the definition of Allah (ﷻ) and the words of the Qur'an, **“...do not disobey Allah in whatever He has commanded them, but [always] do what they are bidden to do” (66:6).**

The second thing requiring clarification in order to understand this and other *āyāt* is that, by being involved with man, Allah (ﷻ) is not diminished in any way whatsoever. Whenever there is a discussion about Allah (ﷻ), a description of Allah's (ﷻ) will and involvement with man, there are some individuals who try to demote or devalue Allah (ﷻ) because He is involved with man's affairs. In some murky minds that makes Him in one sense or another human!

When Allah (ﷻ) says, **“Your Sustainer said unto the angels...,”** these minds that are human-centered cannot imagine that anyone can say anything except that he be human. If they were told Allah (ﷻ) *communicated* to the angels, some of them would still ask: how was this communication done? And if they were informed that there are no details about how the communication occurred, they may use this missing information as an excuse to relieve themselves of the Qur'anic and Islamic affairs altogether. These types have to understand that Allah (ﷻ) is Allah (ﷻ) and man is man. It is because of Allah's (ﷻ) care and love for human beings that He divulges this information and it is because of some humans' ego and conceit that they refuse to place themselves where

they belong in this God-to-man relationship. Man begins to respect himself when he realizes that Allah (ﷻ) is exalted, extolled, and praised while he himself is imperfect, flawed, and inferior. In Allah's (ﷻ) own words, **“Limitless in His glory is your Sustainer, the Lord of almightiness, [exalted] above anything that men may devise by way of definition!” (37:180).**

Another issue that has to be acknowledged is the human mind's ability to latch on to reason in revelation, or what is referred to in Qur'anic terminology as *ta'wil*. To explain this, it should be affirmed that the injunctions of Islam have been anchored in rationality.⁴¹ And so when an *āyah* or authentic and established hadith infer a meaning that is at odds with structured thinking and the rational mind, then it is assumed that the inferred surface meaning of the *āyah* or hadith is not the exhaustive meaning. And this is where *ta'wil* is applied by qualified and competent scholars to blend the rational and the reasonable with that which is revealed and reported. It should be reiterated that Allah (ﷻ) did not address man with meaningless words.

In studying this cluster of *āyāt* from *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, one encounters the mention of angels. These are a form of creation whose existence Allah (ﷻ) has disclosed together with some of their functions. Even though complete information about their nature has not been revealed, the fact of their existence is a certainty. Concerning angels, man should be pleased to know that Allah (ﷻ) has chosen to provide him the information He has, without demanding to know what He has withheld. When it is said that these angels have “wings,” the wings should not be construed to match those of birds with feathers, for if they had such physical characteristics, man would obviously be able to see them.⁴² But as to what form these wings do take, there is not enough information to speculate. When it is said that angels are, in some sense, managing particular physical domains, such as the plant kingdom or the oceans, one can infer that there are spheres of Allah's (ﷻ) integrated “laws of nature” that are somehow supervised by particular angels, making it possible for humans to live in an accommodating world rather than a chaotic and discordant habitat. And such an

understanding can be accepted without question, for there is every reason to do so and no ground for doubt.

“And lo! Your Sustainer said unto the angels, ‘Behold, I am about to constitute a *khalifah* on earth...’” Allah (ﷻ) informed the angels that He is arranging for a deputy on earth. They understood that Allah (ﷻ) will bring into being entities whose nature will combine a potentially absolute resolve with freedom of will and choice, a combination bound to result in a chain of destructive actions and reactions. The nature of these actions and reactions will depend on man’s judgement, which shall be contingent upon the degree of his knowledge and understanding of himself, the world and his Creator. If his actions are not guided by wisdom and the general or public interest, the will of man will have the potential to cause mischief, instability and corruption.

This is a very serious statement, **“Allah is about to constitute a deputy on earth.”** The Arabic word *ja’ala* does not mean *khalafa* (create). Had Allah (ﷻ) said, “Behold, I am about to create on earth one who shall inherit it,” perhaps the angels would not have questioned the intentions of this human being, nor would Iblīs have objected to him; Allah (ﷻ) knows best.

But the heavenly company raised queries about this earthly *khalifah* for a reason. In his individual and collective existence, man was created to become the vessel of Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth. The words *ja’ala* and *khalifah* in the *āyah* moved the angels to pose questions about this new form of intelligent life, and were enough for Satan to take exception. *Ja’ala* means not only that Allah (ﷻ) is going to create a human, He is going to cultivate and develop him as well. In another sense, Allah (ﷻ) has given man the capability of infusing his will with the Will of Allah (ﷻ) through the medium of *rahmah* and *taskhīr* (grace and utility), thereby enabling man to fulfill his role on earth, that of Allah’s (ﷻ) *khalifah*. But he will only be able to execute this role as Allah’s (ﷻ) heir and representative on Earth provided his will is subservient to Allah’s (ﷻ), that is, when his understanding is guided by Allah (ﷻ) and his actions are drilled by Him.

The angels could envision the potential of this human second-to-Allah (ﷻ) to misuse the powers and capabilities given

him, resulting in conflict, injustice, disorder and bloodshed in the world. This man of flesh and bone would find himself involved in a continual struggle against disaster, both natural and man-made. Natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods emerge from this earthly environment, while man-made ones like war and persecution spring from man's vulnerable human nature and his misuse of the powers granted him by Allah (ﷻ). Just in the last century alone, earthquakes have killed nearly two million people worldwide. From Lisbon in 1755 to China in 1976, earthquakes have taken their toll. Volcanoes, extreme weather and drought have also decimated millions of people over the centuries, despite man's limited successes in building defenses against the cataclysmic repercussions of such natural forces. Man's synchronization with the Will of Allah (ﷻ) will be difficult indeed when he encounters inexplicable natural phenomena, which result not only in the collapse of his physical defenses but also the erosion of his mental and spiritual consolidation.

The angels, in their question **“Will You place on it such as will spread corruption...?”** were actually asking the same question that occurs to the human mind in response to specific catastrophes, which may be easier to explain for worldly reasons, such as starvation due to famine, crop failure due to disease, displacement due to warfare, and mass contamination due to the misuse of natural resources. However, with man in a trustee position on earth, such a question can also be posed in response to natural calamities. This is to say that natural and man-made disasters are connected. Consider, for instance, the proposition that ancient killers such as cholera, the bubonic plague, pandemic influenza and smallpox, which have apparently been conquered by modern medicine, are not eradicated but rather subdued. One might ask in this context, not unlike the angels, about the wisdom of a *khalifah* on earth when widespread malnutrition or civil wars can easily provide the conditions for the return of these silent scourges.

Wars have always left a wake of disease, misery and suffering. Improving technology and the increasing power of states over societies have meant that the deleterious impact of war has increased

rather than decreased over time; few will escape entanglement in future conflicts. About 64 million perished in the two “world wars” alone. What makes men visit such cruelty upon their fellow human beings? Whether for profit, pleasure, or persecution of the powerless, human cruelty is often beyond imagination, relatively far worse than “natural” disasters in terms of death and destruction. From the torture of the early “Christians” and “Muslims” to the Zionists’ “final solution” for the Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, how can man be so inhuman and yet qualify to be Allah’s (ﷻ) successor on earth?

“Whereas it is we who extol Your limitless glory, and praise You, and hallow Your name.” This was the context in which the angels posed their inquiry. And Allah (ﷻ) responded,

Verily, I know that which you do not know. And He imparted unto Ādam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said, “Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true.” They replied, “Limitless are You in Your glory! No knowledge have we save that which You have imparted unto us. Verily, You alone are All-Knowing, Truly Wise.” (2:30–32).

It is interesting to note here that Allah’s (ﷻ) response to a seemingly skeptical company of angels about the assignment of humans to stand for Allah (ﷻ) on earth was, “**He imparted unto or taught Ādam the names of all things.**” If Allah (ﷻ) is teaching, then the role of Ādam (ﷺ) and his descendants is to learn. This simple statement is the answer to the complex questions that surface when insecurity and loss of life become evident. The conventional and traditional Muslim will tell you that the world needs spirituality, as will the conventional and traditional followers of other religions. But Allah (ﷻ) is saying that humans need to know, they need to learn, and they need to understand. What is the value of a spirituality that does not know it is effectively in the service of oppressive powers and tyrannical governments, which, in the larger scheme of

things, becomes a spirituality in the service of evil? Man needs proper knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as of science and technology, to move the human condition to the level of *khilāfah*.

Partial and fragmented knowledge is not going to do it, be it “religious” knowledge or “secular” knowledge. It is only this proper, complete and total knowledge that will induce a robust spirituality and a determined pattern of behavior. Only this combination is capable of gaining and maintaining the status of *khalīfah*. It is in identifying and defining things accurately that man has come a long, long way from the Qur'anic description, “...man has been created weak” (4:28); and “And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing...” (16:78). When it was demonstrated that Ādam (ﷺ) knew the definition of “things” and that the angels were unable to show such knowledge, they admitted that Allah (ﷻ) knows what they do not know. The creation of Ādam (ﷺ) caused the angels to realize the limitations of their knowledge and understanding, something they had not previously been aware of. It is this Allah-given capacity to know, learn, understand and think that is the basis of the status granted to Ādam (ﷺ) and his descendants. And man’s assignment to the position of Allah’s (ﷻ) deputy on earth was an eye-opening experience for the angels, as they realized their own shortcomings and the significance of the divine lifeline of information from Allah (ﷻ) to Ādam (ﷺ) and his successors.

The First Kāfir

Allah (ﷻ) shows an affinity with humans through the instrument of knowledge, “and He imparted unto Ādam the names of all [things]” (2:31). Thus humans have a relationship of dependence with Allah (ﷻ), meaning that man is ill-equipped — without help from his Creator — to handle properly his responsibility on earth. Without knowledge, he would not only be weak, but his apparent weakness may lead him to harm himself and others. Allah (ﷻ) says about man’s state of being, “...man has been created in a state of frailty” (4:28), “...man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing,

stubbornly ingrate!” (33:72). At this moment of apparent polarization between man and God, He says to the angels, **“Prostrate yourselves before Ādam!”** And the angels when they realized their lagging knowledge and their subordinate strength, all prostrated themselves. Obedience to Allah (ﷻ) supersedes all intervening factors even if these turn out to be a human destiny of bloodshed, warfare, worldwide instability, and clashes of civilizations. But the apparent discrepancy of an Almighty and Powerful Allah (ﷻ) favoring a fragile and weak humanity stimulates a rationalizing attitude that refuses to accept an Omnipotent Divinity allying itself with an impoverished humanity. Hence, **“...Iblīs, who refused and gloried in his arrogance, and thus he became one who denies the [worldly] power of Allah” (2:34).**

It is not clear from the Qur’an or Sunnah whether there is an integral and essential difference between the angels and the jinn, and if so, what that difference is. There may be a difference of types, with clear differences between their characteristics. Alternatively, it may simply be that the jinn are a subset of the angels. However, the general object here is to expose Shayṭān because of his objection to Allah’s (ﷻ) designation of this weak and flawed human as His *khalifah* on earth. In the satanic mind the oppressed are just that: oppressed. They are created oppressed, they are born oppressed, they deserve to be oppressed, and they should remain oppressed.

This primordial satanic attitude has its contemporary incarnation in the sponsors and maintainers of policies that subdue humanity through institutions of servitude to the strong and mighty in society — the social, economic and political elites of the modern world. The human psychology that cannot imagine a God who favors the poor, the impoverished and the destitute, rationalizes this attitude with arguments of racism, nationalism, ethnic superiority and class supremacy. Long before fascism, imperialism, communism and zionism began to terrorize the mass of humanity, there came the satanic statement of inspiration for these anti-god systems, **“I am better than he: You have created me out of fire, whereas him You have created out of clay” (7:12).**

Continuing from the previous *āyāt*, at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, which highlighted the classification of people into the three broad categories of *mu'mins*, *kuffār*, and *munāfiqs*, here the Qur'an introduces the first known *kāfir*, Iblīs. He is the first form of life and intellect who is known to have objected to Allah's (ﷻ) power. He objected to it not because he did not know or realize that Allah (ﷻ) is the Almighty and the Most-Powerful, for he clearly did. He objected because Allah (ﷻ) wanted to designate a *khalīfah* on earth, by empowering man. Iblīs had no shortage of rationalizations for his conduct, as the coming *sūrah*s reveal. It is also worth noting that even before he was confirmed as a *kāfir*, Iblīs's suspicious behavior had been characterized by questioning and false pride. These are the psychological attitudes of all beings that take issue with the power of Allah (ﷻ) on earth.

After the prototypical *kāfir* is identified, the *āyāt* go on to speak of the condition of *Ādam* (ﷺ), and in this discourse the reader is left with a sense that the angels and *Shayṭān* somehow have access to the vital core of man. They appear to have some influence over the decisions he makes. Thus the instinct that makes him do what is good and right is angelic; the impulse to do what is evil and wrong is satanic. Man's predisposition to do what is right is *tawfiq*; and his tendency to do what is wrong is *ghiwāyah*.

A hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) states that *Shayṭān* circulates in man the way blood circulates in the body.⁴³ This refers to the subtle and pervasive presence of *Shayṭān* in man's life. It is indicated in the Qur'an that *Shayṭān* procreates but Angels do not, **“Will you, then, take him and his offspring for [your] allies instead of Me, although they are your foes...?”** (18:50). These *āyāt* point out that *Ādam* and *Hawwā'* (ﷺ), his *zawj* (spouse), were given the freedom to live and eat from the garden, with just one exception. They were told not to approach a particular tree lest they become guilty of injustice. It can be understood from this *āyah* that human nature has a fascination with the prohibited. It is this fascination that becomes the playground of the devil.

Shayṭān committed several offenses when he took issue with Allah's (ﷻ) power. He flagrantly disobeyed the command of Allah

(ﷻ), he indulged his ego, he disrespected Ādam (ﷺ), and he broke with the heavenly *jamā'ah*. He did all this because Allah (ﷻ) had empowered man and identified him as His *khalifah*. So Shayṭān decided to prove his point by subverting this human being, which he will continue to do until the Last Day. Allah (ﷻ) has access to the human mind, heart, and soul through *ilhām* (91:8 and other *āyāt*), while Shayṭān has access to the human mind, heart, and soul through *wiswās* (114:4–5 and others). Today the “ego” is armed to the teeth with weapons galore, while the Adamic human has only the power of his dignity, which lives on through a process of painstaking and rational loyalty to Allah (ﷻ).

Through the satanic connection that foments latent ambitions and greed, Ādam (ﷺ) — the human — and his mate stumbled. They lost their balance and hence their presence in the eternal garden. In other words, true to their human nature, they succumbed to their human susceptibility and weakness through Shayṭān’s contact with them. Thus, they (Ādam, Ḥawwā’ (ﷻ), and Shayṭān) were told to descend as “enemies of each other.” Earth was to be their new domicile and abode for a time.

Then Ādam (ﷺ) was forgiven his transgression as he repented his error. Ādam (ﷺ) learned the error of his actions through experience, and Allah (ﷻ) embraces those who learn, even if it is by their mistakes, as long as their egos do not thrive on their sins. Ādam (ﷺ) knew that he had made a mistake; he knew that errors entail consequences. He regretted what he had done. Notice that the feelings of regret and shame follow the realization of error. Out of this comes a determination not to repeat the mistake. This is the atonement that gains Ādam (ﷺ) and his descendants absolution and grace. So Allah (ﷻ) had such compassion for humans that He did not leave them to wander without guidance in a world charged with satanic pulses; instead, he promised to provide them guidance,

There shall, nonetheless, most certainly come unto you guidance from Me, and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve; but those who are bent on denying My power presence

and giving the lie to Our messages — they are destined for the fire, and therein shall they abide (2:38–39).

From these *āyāt* (2:30–39), it becomes evident that Allah (ﷻ) has empowered man and designated him His *khalifah* on earth. This places man in the position he should be in, a position of honor, dignity and power. Man should never become an adjunct to a machine, nor should he become mechanized. There is a standard human that Allah (ﷻ) has empowered, and he should do his best to live up to his responsibilities. Man cannot forget or conveniently hide the fact that the universe has been regulated to accommodate him and make his life convenient. This was not done by some random event or sequence of events; the odds against that happening are impossible. There is a God who made all this possible with His knowledge and wisdom, and He cares for man so much that He has provided him with scripture and revelation so that he can reason and learn. This is intended to enable him to do what is required. If man errs, then He forgives, provided that he first repents.

Materialism has triggered the emergence of a class of power-hungry people who have severed the natural human relationship with Allah (ﷻ). They displace this relationship with ideologies and systems of secularism that marginalize or deny Allah's (ﷻ) power-presence in human affairs, and in the universe as a whole. The materialistic camps of this world routinely trespass on Allah's (ﷻ) prerogatives, and violate the proper heaven-to-earth relationship in every possible way. Out of this mess on earth the only way to redeem mankind is for man to realize that Allah (ﷻ) wants to favor him when he is weak — the precise point that Shayṭān objected to. However, man is required to maintain a deliberate and conscious relationship of humility and subservience with Allah (ﷻ), and be able and willing to improve this relationship. If, in this struggle between a human who is developing a conscious relationship with Allah (ﷻ), and Shayṭān who is determined to thwart this relationship by appealing to the human ego, humans make mistakes and errors, Allah (ﷻ) will accept their repentance provided they are genuinely striving to purge their individual and collective

selves of the ego. The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) said, “No person with a scintilla of ego in his heart will enter paradise.”⁴⁴

Among the most provocative arguments used against humans who want to fulfill their role of *khilāfah* on earth is that they are establishing a theocracy, or “playing God,” or “holier than thou,” or claim to be God’s representatives on earth to the exclusion of all other peoples. This is a gross misrepresentation of the role of Muslims who are, and should always be, aware of their unique role of “light unto the peoples of the world.” This is not simply an Islamic version of the Western tradition of power monopoly and manipulation. Should Muslims understand their role in such a similarly arrogant manner, or behave in identical ways once in positions of power, they clearly do not understand Allah’s (ﷻ) purpose in His empowerment of man and are themselves falling victim to Shayṭān’s appeals to their egos.

The risks implicit in this error are the subject of the next major theme of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, constituting *āyāt* 2:40–176. After discussing the general classification of humans, and highlighting the nature of man’s power relationship with Allah (ﷻ), and the nature of Shayṭān’s attempts to disrupt it, the first section of these *āyāt* (2:40–74) elucidates the experience of Banū Isrā’īl. The Children of Israel understood this lesson of man’s empowerment as Allah’s (ﷻ) deputy on earth, but circumvented and convoluted it to elevate their collective racial and ethnic ego. Addressed directly to Banū Isrā’īl, these *āyāt* remind them of their history, and in particular their repeated failures in being true to their Covenant with Allah (ﷻ). At the same time, Allah’s (ﷻ) words have a secondary meaning to Muslims, warning them against making similar errors. The *āyāt* following this particular set of *āyāt*, addressed directly to the new Muslim community in Madinah, warn them of the Yahūdī enmity in Yathrib and advise them on how to deal with these scriptural adversaries. Again, these *āyāt* have broader relevance than simply the immediate historical situation, offering perennial guidance to Muslims on how to respond when facing similar situations.

Who Are the Children of Israel?

- O Children of Israel! Recall those privileges of Mine with which I dignified you, and fulfill your Covenant with Me, (So that) I shall fulfill My Covenant with you; and of Me, of Me be in awe.
- Commit to that which I have [now] bestowed upon you from on high, confirming the truth already in your possession, and be not foremost amongst those who deny its truth; and do not barter away My messages for trifling gain; and of Me, of Me be guarded.
- And do not coat the truth with falsity. And do not deliberately conceal the truth while you are in possession of it;
- And have the affiliation with Allah as your standard, and a system of giving money [where it is due]. And humble yourselves with those who are likewise humble.
- Do you urge people to be virtuous, while you forget your own selves — and [yet] you recite the divine Writ? Will you not use your reason?
- Seek help in patience and *ṣalāh*; and truly it is difficult [to do so] except for those who are humble-minded;
- Who know that they will have to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are returning.
- O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favored you over all people;
- And remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be supported (al-Baqarah:40–48).

The Qur'anic discourse here takes a historical turn from the empowerment of Ādam (ﷺ) to the empowerment of the Children of Israel. The previous *āyāt* explained how Ādam's (ﷺ) failure to honor his obedience to Allah (ﷻ) caused him to lose his heavenly presence, and thereby suffer the negative consequences of Allah's (ﷻ) corrective justice. Violating one of Allah's (ﷻ) orders, he ate

يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفِ
بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا
مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ ۗ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَابَتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ
فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَالْبَاطِلُ بِالْحَقِّ وَانْتُمْ
تَعَامُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾
أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ نَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى
الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾
يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا
شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

from the prohibited tree — the archetypal act, providing insight into an aspect of human nature that has a proclivity for doing the unlawful. Continuing on the same theme, the next group of *āyāt*, starting from *āyah* 2:40, expound on the failure of the Children of Israel to honor their directives. This Israeli impropriety in perpetuity has forfeited them the status of a chosen people. The divine Trust was eventually given to the Arabs (and not the Arabians) after it was taken away from the Israelis (and not the Hebrews).

This detail should become clear as the developmental context is expanded in the next one hundred *āyāt*.

It should be noted that the motivation of Adam and Eve (ﷺ) to err (not sin) against Allah (ﷻ) came from their ambition to become supermen and superwomen with everlasting life.

Thereupon Shayṭān insinuated unto the two with a view to making them conscious of their nakedness of which (hitherto) they had been unaware; and he said, “Your Sustainer has but forbidden you this tree lest you two become [as] angels, or lest you live forever” (7:20).

Instead of having the human, through self-denial, blend into the divinity of Allah (ﷻ) through His decree, the ego in man sought to have it all: confirmed heavenly status, eternity, and the manifestation of an individualistic absolutism. The societal embodiment of the Adamic mistake would ultimately evolve into Banū Isrā’īl, who would multiply and socialize what was in generations past a personal trait; the Adam-and-Eve ego was promoted in Israeli history from those individualistic moments of a vulnerable persona of Ādam (ﷺ) to a premeditating clan of Israel.

This new feature that is diametrically and doggedly opposed to the divine Will is the communal individualism of Banū Isrā’īl. This communal individualism that is fed by a lesser individual absolutism has become the test of any human concentration of power. When Ādam (ﷺ) was empowered to be Allah’s (ﷻ) *khalifāh* he “grew an ego.” When the Israelis were empowered to be pioneers of a divine system on earth they also “grew an ego,” from which emerged such notions as “God’s chosen race,” “God’s chosen people,” the gentiles, the goyim, and other analogous concepts. As the Israelis have sought to be God’s chosen race, Ādam and his wife (ﷺ), in a sense, wanted to be God’s chosen individuals. In both cases the concept and the handling of power has gone to the ego instead of to the heart. Other nationalisms and racisms are but an imitation or a mutation of this serious mistake and manifest deviation from the human-to-divine relationship.

It is this type of religious ego that characterized the Israelis at the time of the Qur'anic and Muhammadi advent. Their attitude in Madinah was one of arrogance and condescension. They deployed all their explicit and implicit capabilities to combat and retard the diffusion of an Islam that sought to obliterate the concentration of power around human eccentric and exclusive dynasties. Their strategy was hell-bent on denying any progress to the overwhelmed Muslims of the time. These self-centered Yahūd realized that Islam was ascending in Madinah and throughout the Arabian Peninsula while their selfish and egocentric interpretation of scripture was being eroded. They began to lose their literary and economic grip on things, especially when Islam was able to consolidate the Aws and Khazraj to a degree that made it impossible for Yahūd to play on their rivalries and vulnerabilities.

This hostile Yahūdī attitude and belligerent state-of-mind has not adjourned ever since those parting years in Madinah. No doubt Yahūd have become more experienced and less obvious in their animosity towards Islam and the Islamic Movement. At their core, the Yahūd are bitter enemies of all things Muslim and Islamic; but on the surface, they pretend or rather assert they are “cousins,” “Semitic brothers,” advocates of peace and Abrahamic co-religionists! Their hearts are bitterly opposed to Islamic change but their tongues are sweetly reconciled with the “Islamic” status quo. In centuries past, successive generations of Yahūd were persecuted in different regions of the world, not finding any safe haven except in Muslim lands and with Muslim peoples. Nonetheless, in an act of historical treason and human betrayal, today they turn around and spearhead the contemporary confederated continentalist campaign against the beleaguered Muslims. When oppressed Yahūd were peaceful to powerful Muslims, the latter were peaceful with the former. But now that they have gained earthly power and quickly turned hostile against the oppressed Muslims, it is only a matter of time before the suppressed Muslims, en masse, will turn hostile against them.

Yahūd, having prior knowledge of the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ) in their holy scriptures, did not acknowledge the noble

Messenger (ﷺ). Yahūd, having peaceful accommodation and fairness for centuries as they lived amongst past Muslim generations in Andalus, North Africa and the Middle East, did not acknowledge this Islamic hospitality. Prior knowledge and former experience of the Muslims and from the Muslims does not register on a Yahūdī psychology that is reared and nurtured within a racist and eccentric interpretation and indoctrination of scripture and revelation. Listen to Allah's (ﷻ) words that have not been altered or distorted, **“O Children of Israel!”** This is how these racists define themselves. They claim that they are the descendants of Israel, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham (ﷺ). Israel, his father and grandfather, and great-grandfather (ﷺ) and all his ancestors came from the area between the Euphrates and the Nile, an area of the world that has witnessed the settlement and displacement of human waves of populations as conquering and vanquished armies moved in and out. Among others, the Egyptians, Romans, Persians, Greeks, Hebrews and Byzantines have passed through, long before the colonial European age and the new American century.

The mass movement of people to and from the area defies a genetic definition of a pure race. Semites are a stock of human race no doubt. But who are the Semites? Are they an exclusive race similar to the dark-skinned of Africa, the pale-skinned of Europe, the dim-skinned of Asia? Or have the Semites become the synthesis of these genes, hues and races? The Israeli antiquated obsession with race hurdles over historical facts and asserts that they (the Israelis and the Jews) are the only Semites in the world! *Semitic* has become the academic word synonymous with *Jewish*, and *Semite* has become synonymous with *Jew*, much in the same way terrorism has become the media moniker referring to Islam and terrorist to Muslim!

All of this Yahūdī monopoly of “Semitism” has been initiated by European Yahūd who forcefully, and in a duplicitous manner, rallied to the Israeli flag of “Semitic” racism when they have no ethical or tribal relationship to Semitism. Russian, Polish, Slovak and Northern European Yahūd hijacked Semitism, mafia style, and now claim they are the only Semites in the world. After decades of willful and deliberate obfuscation, who in the world knows that

being anti-Yahūdī is not the same as being anti-Semitic? And who in the world has enough common sense left, after this worldwide Yahūdī brainwashing, to know that David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin, and Benjamin Netanyahu⁴⁵ are not Semitic, unless of course, Ferdinand Esterhazy of the Dreyfus Affair,⁴⁶ Dr. Daniel Malan of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party,⁴⁷ and Adolf Hitler⁴⁸ are also Semites!

“O Children of Israel!” Note that the Qur’an never refers to the Children of Israel as the Children of Jacob, although Israel and Jacob are two names of the same person, the son of Isaac (ﷺ). Rather, in some ensuing *āyāt*, the Qur’an speaks reverentially about the soul mates of Jacob (ﷺ), *Āl Ya‘qūb*, in contrast with its negative characterization of the Children of Israel. On the Yahūdī attitude to being the “Children of Israel,” this writer heard a rabbi some years ago say in a one-on-one conversation that he (the rabbi) does not believe in the immutability of the Bible. He believes in the continuous history of the Children of Israel, a history and an experience that is responsible for the commonality of the Jews.

Lest anyone get the impression that there is something wrong with being the Children of Israel, it should be underscored that, on the contrary, being the children of a prophet is both a privilege and an honor, especially when that prophet is the son of another Prophet (Isaac), and the grandson of the Patriarch of Prophets, Abraham (ﷺ). The malaise inflicted on humanity via the Israeli credo, though, comes from the notion that a religion of God is legitimized by a particular race or people. Notice in this respect how, because of Israeli tribalism-cum-racism, Judaism is not a proselytizing religion.

A useful method in lifting these Israelis out of their racism and religious communalism is to highlight the fact that only God’s regard for them, as opposed to their genetic heritage, placed them in a position to fulfill their covenant with God. Allah (ﷻ) reminds them of His blessings and grace upon them. Were they not slaves, a lower caste, humiliated and oppressed in the land until He liberated them? Their relationship with Ishāq (ﷺ) did not exclude them from tyranny and persecution. It was the movement of God

within history that brought about “miracles” (43:55 and other *āyāt*) intended less to honor their genes than to deliver their souls.

This Qur’an came to authenticate the trial-by-tribulation history of the Children of Israel in order to persuade them to acknowledge God’s power. It is this Qur’anic explanation of history that caused the Yahūdī people, who are obsessed with their Israeli religious racism, to be the first to object to the Prophet (ﷺ) in Madinah, and then to develop a deep aversion to Islam that, by the way, shows no signs of abating. It should also be noted that nowhere in the Qur’an does Allah (ﷻ) address those who consider the Qur’an their Book as “O Children of Ismā’īl (Ishmael),” which would be the equivalent of addressing those who consider the Torah their Book as “O Children of Israel.” That is because the best way to jolt the Israelis out of their racism and religious chauvinism is to drill in the fact that it is due to God’s regard and not to their race or descent that they were honored above others.

Islamic history was not to develop in the same way as Judaic history. At no time have Muslims ever considered that their position as Muslims and their allegiance to the Qur’an were based on any racial or ethnic consideration, such as their descent from Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Although the phrases “Arabic Qur’an” and “*Āl Muḥammad*” have been used by some Muslims to try to foster notions of nationalism or sectarianism in the Ummah, Muslims as a whole have never advanced any claims to an exclusivist position vis-à-vis other peoples of faith. It is to highlight this element of the Yahūdī misinterpretation of scripture that the phrase “O Children of Israel” is used to address them about 40 times in the Flawless Qur’an.

“O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and fulfill your promise unto Me, [whereupon] I shall fulfill My promise unto you; and of Me, of Me stand in awe!” (2:40). This *āyah* tells us that the Israelis can learn and progress if they recall their history. All that is required of them is to look back, think, and recognize that it was Allah (ﷻ) who saw them through every difficulty. In *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and elsewhere in the Qur’an, Allah (ﷻ) calls on the Israelis to look back and realize how Allah (ﷻ) cared for them, delivering them

from one predicament after another, and then favoring them with exodus and salvation. But instead of appreciating these favors and repaying them with gratitude, humility and worship, the Israelis have neither been thankful nor shown any understanding. It seems that the more Allah (ﷻ) favors them, the more they want to disfavor Him. It is this breakdown in human-divine dealings that has tarred the record of the Children of Israel. And it is this breakdown that has caused the divine annulment of the Israeli status of “Chosen People,” and His sending of the final Scripture to a Prophet of another race, something that the Yahūd of the Prophetic period found so difficult to accept.

“O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I have graced you...” But the failure of the Israelis is not one of memory only; it is one of understanding and historical mindset. If it was simply a matter of remembering, here is the Qur’an, Allah’s (ﷻ) final Scripture, reminding them of His profuse bounties. The Qur’an exposes these Israelis because they distorted their history and faith, introducing racist elements totally alien to Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance, and in the process effectively abandoning their Covenant with their Creator, Most High and Supreme.

“...and of Me, of Me be terrified.” This last phrase indicates very strongly that the Israelis show no fear of Allah (ﷻ), which is not a particularly Israeli characteristic, for many people go through life showing no apprehension or awareness of Allah’s (ﷻ) power. Such reminders occur repeatedly in the Qur’an, addressed not only to Banū Isrā’īl, but to all people. But in the context of Allah (ﷻ) having shepherded the Israeli experience, it becomes doubly offensive for these Israelis to show no anxiety or alarm when it comes to Allah (ﷻ).

“Commit to that which I have [now] bestowed from on high, confirming the truth already in your possession, and be not foremost among those who deny its truth; and do not barter away My messages for a trifling gain; and of Me, of Me be guarded” (2:41). The Arabic word *āminū* is often incorrectly translated as *believe*. But the word *believe* fails to convey any sense of action or implementation, meanings which are central to the Arabic word

āminū. To believe in a transcendental God in the Western secular mind does not necessarily mean to believe in God's active involvement in human affairs and the working of the cosmos. But *imān* — the verbal noun of *āminū* — is, by definition, the assimilation of the One and Only Deity into the human conscience and conduct. The Israelis were, therefore, required to commit themselves, both spiritually and actively, to the acceptance and support of this new Scripture (the Qur'an), which in itself is an endorsement of prior scripture already in Israeli possession. The fact that they had been the recipients of prior scripture should have made it easier for them to accept this new divine Prophet (ﷺ) and revelation, instead of becoming their main enemies.

“...and do not be the first to deny its validity; and do not debase it by trading it for some negligible cost; and of Me, of Me be guarded” (2:41). And yet, despite their previous exposure to divine scripture, these Children of Israel became the foremost enemies of this Qur'an, this Prophet (ﷺ), and this *dīn*. Being the money-mongers they are, these Israelis have been warned by the Qur'an against this error in precisely the terms they should best understand. But commerce has become the religion of those who consider themselves the “Children of Israel.” Money is their idol; financial institutions are their temples and wealth is their fanatical pursuit. Economy has been their creed from time immemorial. Israel, their nation-state god, has become a financial enterprise that is not only meant to sap the Muslims militarily but also to drain the world financially.

The Yahūdī mind is not concerned with the truth of scripture as much as it is obsessed with making money out of devaluing it and out of simultaneously misrepresenting both Islamic revivalism and “Islamic terrorism.” It is no exaggeration that the vast majority of discussions on the Islamic movement now taking place around the world are anchored, analyzed, discussed, debated, and directed by Yahūd. All of these media stunts by Yahūdī public relations experts are designed to secure a bustling Israeli economy concerned with the flow of petroleum from an impoverished Muslim Ummah to a predatory Western alliance and financial infrastructure. In our pres-

ent world, it should be more than obvious that this alliance is primarily concerned with the security of Israel at the expense of Africa, Asia, and other dispossessed areas of the world. These Israeli megalomaniacs do not have the spiritual pulse necessary for the type of social and military policies that protect against the wrath and revenge of Allah (ﷻ). So Allah (ﷻ) advises and warns them, **“And of Me, of Me be guarded...”** But, as usual, they continue down the path of self-destruction and possible annihilation.

“And do not coat the truth with falsehood, and do not [deliberately] conceal the truth; and have the affiliation with Allah as your standard, and a system of giving money [where it is due], and humble yourselves with those who are likewise humble” (2:42–43). One of the most durable Israeli fabrications, which has sunk deep into the public psyche, is their presentation of Islam as a religion of Muhammad (ﷺ) and not as an extension of the Old and New Testaments, of the *dīns* of Noah, Abraham and Jesus (ﷺ). Their claim is that the Qur’an comes from Yahūd and Christians, in the sense that it is a distorted version of those previous revelations and faiths, rather than coming directly from Allah (ﷻ).

The message of the Qur’anic scripture is inclusive, while that of the Israeli is exclusive. So Islam, in their projection, has to fit into the Israeli understanding of the structure of mutually exclusive religions and become a religion at tension with others, especially Christianity, Judaism, and to a lesser extent, Hinduism and Buddhism. What is worse, this Israeli interpretation of Islam has circulated so widely that many people take it for granted, including some Muslims. The introduction of friction into the Islamic experience is designed not only to aggravate antipathy between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also to deftly sew discord within the house of Islam. So there are outsiders working assiduously to exacerbate differences and tensions between Shi’īs and Sunnīs, Arabs and non-Arabs, blacks and whites, men and women, and so on, until a potent charge is generated to ignite internal wars and feuds. The result is that the original, all-inclusive, seasoned and enduring Islam has been eclipsed by the Israeli-cum-Yahūdī version of Islam.

One thing that may be said about a Yahūdī is that he is a habitual money-maker. He will honor no standards when it comes to making profit. So when divine standards are entrusted to this type of human, a word of caution accompanies it, **“and do not sell Allah’s messages (communiques) away for a cheap price.”** This may mean, for instance, that the Yahūdī sages should be very careful when they have to make a choice between Allah’s (ﷻ) words and the wealthy people who may be condemned by these words. **“And do not disguise the facts with fabrications and camouflage the truth while you are aware of it.”** The sages should not try to hide Allah’s (ﷻ) words or distort them to curry favor with the ultra-rich in society. Even if they were to gain the whole world for their manipulation of scriptural texts, it would be a miserable gain, if any at all.

But it is not only the scriptures entrusted to Banū Isrā’īl that have fallen victim to this Yahūdī habit of cloaking or distorting the truth. This second nature of Yahūd has also caused many problems in the Muslim Ummah. Was it not these Yahūd who were promoting themselves as the true interpreters of Islam, to try to undo the fatwa against Salman Rushdie following the publication in 1988 of his blasphemous book, *The Satanic Verses*?⁴⁹ Is it not the Yahūdī establishment that demonizes an independent and revolutionary Islamic impulse represented by Imam Khomeini? Is it not the same Yahūdī establishment that projects a respectable image of the “Islamic” Saudi dynasty?

“Do you urge people to be virtuous, the while you forget your own selves? And yet you recite the divine writ? Will you not, then, use your reason?” (2:44). This is the Yahūdī charade. These Yahūd want other people to be ethical, ideal, and upright, while they themselves remain exempt from such considerations. God forbid that a non-Yahūdī should express resentment, displeasure, or indignation at Yahūd. In a world where the Yahūd are the anointed, they cannot be or do wrong; they are incapable of racism, fanaticism, thuggery, aggression, or acts of hate. In that same Yahūdī mindset, all non-Yahūd are guilty until proven innocent. Despite this contorted view of reality, Yahūd set out to preach to the world the concepts of morality and ethics.

They can see racism in Europe and America. They can point to the holocaust and to discrimination against Jews in the American South. They go on from there to bludgeon the Euro-American psyche with the details of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Fascism, Nazism, and all other projections of their subliminal fears and fantasies, real and imagined. Inevitably the whole process is commercialized and Yahūd make a killing out of the Europeans' guilt complex towards the Jews. Thus, the Yahūdī state of Israel continues to collect from the US and Germany billions of dollars per annum to compensate for the historical trauma inflicted by racist Aryans and white people on the Semites and the Jews.

In the US and the Republic of South Africa, these holier-than-thou Yahūd were strident, outspoken and vehemently against the policies of segregation in the US and apartheid in South Africa. In the US, the Yahūd were active in the civil rights movement;⁵⁰ in South Africa they held key positions in the African National Congress (ANC).⁵¹ Students, professors, lawyers, politicians, officials, and activists from those who define themselves as the "Children of Israel" were in the frontline against these evil institutionalized models of racism and bigotry. And yet these same Yahūdī activists and civil-rights functionaries, with all their liberal and leftwing connections and relations, remain deaf, dumb and blind to the mother of all ghettos and Bantustans, the original sin called Zionist Israel. **"Do you [the Israelis] command other people to virtue and forget about [doing the same to] yourselves? And you [claim to] recite scripture? Have you no reason?" (2:44).**

This peculiar Israeli ingratitude occurs despite the blessings and gifts from Allah (ﷻ) that the Qur'an outlines. These modern Israelis are reminded by the Qur'an of Allah's (ﷻ) bestowals on them in their "sacred" history. Little wonder that a part of the modern Israeli-Zionist agenda is to have these *āyāt* of the Qur'an expunged from school textbooks and systematically excluded from public discourse. When the Ashkenazi chief Rabbi of Israel visited the Shaykh of Al-Azhar University in Egypt, he chided him for an hour and a half over the negative image of Jews in the Egyptian educational system and press.⁵² Talk about *chutzpah*; these Yahūd

are, by and large, the macro-managers of Egyptian officialdom, including the Egyptian curricula and press, but still they have the nerve to complain! This is all the more shameless considering that this Yahūdī attitude is not based on any universal morality for it does not recognize the Lord who helped them through their ordeals with an abundance of Prophets (ﷺ), miracles galore, and finally a compassionate Semitic Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ). Instead, these ancient and contemporary rabbis have particularized their scripture and worldview by deleting and obliterating all biblical references to this last and final Prophet (ﷺ).

O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favored you over all people; and remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be helped (2:47–48).

Once again the words of Allah (ﷻ) define these individuals by their own choice of affiliation: “Children of Israel.” This self-designation is one that embodies and encourages exclusivity, tribalism and racism. Then Allah (ﷻ) tells them to remember the favors He gave them, as their collective behavioral psychology has a tendency to forget the blessings Allah (ﷻ) has granted them. Allah (ﷻ) favored them when they favored Him, but as they began to drift from their solemn covenant with Allah (ﷻ), He withdrew the privileged status they had gained through diligent faith. With the arrogance that has become an Israeli trait, the contemporary affiliates of Israel have taken this as a permanent condition and claim they are God’s chosen race until the end of time, wherever they are and whatever they do. This writer debated with a rabbi in Florida about a decade ago, and the learned rabbi quoted from the Qur’an, and this *āyah* in particular, to establish the fact that the Israelis are God’s chosen race! Fortunately, Muslims are not so naive as to acquiesce to such a perpetual claim. Muslims, and all people of

common sense, know that criminals, perverts, usurious businessmen, drug-dealers, money-launderers, and arms merchants cannot be chosen for privilege.

“O Descendants of Israel!... guard yourselves against [the consequences of] a Day when one soul shall not relieve another soul, nor shall intercession be accepted from any, nor shall any be able to ransom itself, and none shall be helped” (2:48). The privileges granted to the Children of Israel were conditional upon their assumption and discharge of power in light of divine guidance. But power can corrupt, and it corrupted the Children of Israel, as history demonstrates. When that corruption set in and the leaders of Israel were no longer capable of fulfilling God’s command to administer power with justice and equity, they forfeited His divine favor and fell from grace to treachery. It was their position of honor and reverence, which accrued from the principled exercise of temporal power, that led the Children of Israel to believe they were the only people belonging to God, to believe they were the only humans deserving God’s care, and to believe that all other peoples were inferior. Even when Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ) were divinely commissioned to rectify this attitude, the Israelis killed these men of God.

It is no coincidence that in the course of history, these Israelis fell from the seat of Jerusalemite power into the ghettos and slums of human societies around the world. In the Israeli interpretation of history and humanity, prophets are to be censured if they challenge the deviations and excesses of the Children of Israel. It is little wonder that Allah (ﷻ) condemned these Israelis to a life of ignominy. Their insistence on an Israelist universe has earned them their history of exodus and exile. One might think that a reminder would humble their egos and draw them back into the divine fold. This Qur’an, Allah’s (ﷻ) final word to humanity, tries to do precisely that by reminding them of a time when they were dear to Allah (ﷻ) and when Allah (ﷻ) was near to them; but these Israelis will not have it. Their atrophied consciences seem to be beyond the warnings of the Qur’an. They do not want to be reminded. And so, as they do not want to open their consciences

to times past, the Qur'an gives them a vision of the future, a Day when the Israeli individual is ripped from the Israeli clan and he has to stand alone and account for his deeds, **“when a soul cannot compensate for another soul.”**

Each human has been given free will and the capacity to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. He should not let himself be swayed by any ideology that violates divine justice, a divine justice that guarantees man's dignity and honor. Now that the Israelis are back in power and repeating their abuse of it from Jerusalem, they have managed to brainwash world public opinion into believing that the Israeli standards are firm and final, and that other people can be killed off with impunity. The psychology of these Israelis is almost unbelievable. When the Qur'an reminds them of their glorious Godly past, they refuse to remember it; and when the Qur'an warns them of the inevitable encounter with God to come, they do not want to know. This is a common feature of those who sell themselves for the trappings of power, including non-Yahūd, and even Muslims, whose behavior shows similar traits. The Qur'an's warning is there for all peoples for all times; it is not going to react to their pitiful power predicament. The Qur'an is going to continue to drill in the lesson until they adjust and behave or show contempt and act with arrogance and aggression.

Reminders of Favor, Punishment and Redemption

- And [remember the time] when We saved you from Pharaoh's affiliates, who afflicted you with cruel suffering, slaughtering your sons and sparing [only] your women — which was an awesome trial from your Sustainer.
- And [also] when We cleft the sea before you, and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's people to drown before your very eyes.
- And [remember] when We appointed for Moses forty nights [on Mount Sinai], and in his absence you took the [golden] calf [to worship], and thus became evildoers.
- Yet, even after that, We blotted out your sin, so that you might [have cause to] be grateful.

وَإِذْ بَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ
 أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾
 وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَبْجَيْنَاكُم مِّنْهُ وَغَرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ
 نَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ أَخَذْنَا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ
 بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ
 ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
 بَاتَخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ فَمُتُّوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
 عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ فَنَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ
 يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ
 نَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾
 وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُوا مِنْ
 طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾
 وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا
 الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ

الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ
 فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾
 وَإِذْ أَسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ
 فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ
 كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِذْ
 قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا
 تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِشَآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسَهَا وَبَصِلَهَا قَالَ
 أَسْتَبْدِلُوكَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَهْبَطُوا مِصْرًا
 فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ وَالْمَسْكَانَةُ وَبَاءَ وَ
 بِعَضْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ
 النَّبِيَّاتِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّٰدِقِينَ وَالصَّٰبِرِينَ مِنَ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ
 وَيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ
 عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ
 الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا ءَاتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ
 لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ أَعْتَدُوا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ
 فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا
 وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

- And [remember] when We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ — and [thus] a standard [by which to discern the true from the false] — so that you might be guided aright.
- And [remember] when Moses said unto his people, “O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf; turn, then, in repentance to your Maker and mortify yourselves; this will be the best for you in your Maker’s sight.” And thereupon He accepted your repentance: for behold, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.
- And [remember] when you said, “O Moses, indeed we shall not believe you until we see God face to face!” Whereupon the thunderbolt of punishment overtook you before your very eyes.
- But We raised you again after you had been as dead, so that you might have cause to be grateful.
- And We sent the clouds to comfort you with their shade, and sent down unto you *manna* and quails, [saying,] “Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance.” And [by all their sinning] they did no harm unto Us — but [only] against their own selves did they sin.
- And [remember the time] when We said, “Enter this dominion, and eat of its food as you may desire, abundantly, but enter the passageway humbly and say, ‘Remove You from us

the burden of our sins,' [whereupon] We shall forgive you your sins, and shall amply reward the doers of good."

- But those who were offenders substituted another statement for that which had been given to them; and so We sent down upon those offenders a plague from heaven in requital for all their iniquity.
- And [remember] when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied, "Strike the rock with your staff!" Whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that all the people knew whence to drink. [And Moses said,] "Eat and drink the sustenance provided by Allah, and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption."
- And [remember] when you said, "O Moses, indeed we cannot endure but one kind of food; pray, then, to your Sustainer that He bring forth for us aught of what grows from earth — of its herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, its onions." Said Moses, "Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so much] better? Go back in shame to Egypt, and then you can you have what you are asking for!" And so ignominy and humiliation overshadowed them and they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation. They were afflicted with all this because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's messages and in slaying the Prophets against all right. Also because they rebelled [against Allah] and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.
- Indeed, those who are committed to [the power of] Allah [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Judaic faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians — all who are observant of Allah's covenant and the Last Day and do honorable deeds — shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.
- And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising the Mount high above you, [and saying,] "Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and bear in mind all that is therein, so that you might remain conscious of Allah!"

- And you turned away after that! And had it not been for Allah's favor upon you and His grace, you would surely have found yourself among the losers.
- For you are well aware of those from among you who profaned the Sabbath, whereupon We said unto them, "Be as apes despicable!"
- And so We set them up as a warning and example for their time and for all times to come, as well as an admonition to all who are conscious of Allah['s power] (al-Baqarah:49–66).

The ever-true words of the Qur'an proceed to detail the blessings that were bestowed upon the Israelis in previous times. Allah (ﷻ) enumerates His bounties to them and how they responded: they were ungrateful and always prone to denying God's hand in their lives. The first and foremost significant godsend was their deliverance from Pharaoh's tyranny in Egypt,

And [remember the time] when We saved you from Pharaoh's affiliates, who afflicted you with cruel suffering, slaughtering your sons and sparing [only] your women — which was an awesome trial from your Sustainer. And [also] when We cleft the sea before you, and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's people to drown before your very eyes (2:49–50).

These *āyāt*, which the Israelis choose to ignore, are a reminder of the times of hardship in their history. Allah (ﷻ) is offering them the opportunity to acknowledge His care and His help when they needed it most, to cause them to remember and return to His guidance. The Qur'anic words imply that the Israeli slave condition was such that they were being humiliated daily and routinely, "yasūmūnakum sū'a al-'adhāb..." The consequences were horrendous: male Israelis were being systematically executed while the Israeli women were spared but subjected to governmental abuse and mistreatment. This was a moment in which the Israelis felt they had no support, relief, sympathizers or friends, and no inter-

vention from anyone. It is precisely such dire moments in the life of a people that test their commitment and obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and their trust and reliance on Him.

All human social orders reach such points of collective despair at some stage, and often they deny Allah's (ﷻ) available support. Peoples' pain is not in vain if they turn to Allah (ﷻ) when they most need Him. Overwhelming earthly power should never distract sincere and steadfast subjects of Allah (ﷻ) from His time-tested and proven power, which cannot be threatened by any self-styled superpower, ancient or contemporary. Under Pharaonic rule, Israeli society was clearly under immense, indeed mortal, pressure. But the result of this "social torture" was to have the social survivors — in this case, the women of Israel — develop an intimate relationship of faith and sacrifice with Allah (ﷻ). It is through such relationships that oppression is overturned and social conditions change.

Trials and tribulations are not chance episodes in the lives of societies. They are meant to bring a society back to its Sustainer. What follows becomes a paradigm shift that owes its origins to those special humans who stand up to the causes of their collective misfortunes and wretchedness, usually the established earthly powers. At the same time, they understand the need for Allah's (ﷻ) intervention on their behalf. The adherents of this profound understanding and its active manifestations are enabled to handle the pressures they face, to internalize the common experiences of adversity, to learn from both their weaknesses and their strengths, and to endure that extra step, a step that invites Allah's (ﷻ) love and favor.

The lesson of these Qur'anic *āyāt* is that the Israelis, in their long history, repeatedly faced tests demanding fealty to that final, extra step, but instead of taking it, would turn against Allah (ﷻ) and His Apostles (ﷺ). Although in principle, the Israelis admit hope into their religious feelings, they actually display despair and frustration when they are expected to be confident of Allah's (ﷻ) relief. No one, however, should doubt the severity of the tests the Israelis were doomed to suffer, hence the Qur'anic observation, "**which was an awesome trial from your Sustainer.**" This trial was followed by divine relief, "**and [when] We cleft the sea before you,**

and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's affiliates to drown before your very eyes." The details of this rescue operation are outlined in the Makkan *sūrah*s,

And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and thereupon Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them with vehement insolence and tyranny, until [they were overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. And] when he was about to drown, [Pharaoh] exclaimed, "I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender themselves unto Him!" (10:90).

And, indeed, [a time came when] We thus inspired Moses, "Go forth with My servants by night, and strike out for them a dry path through the sea; [and] fear not of being overtaken, and dread not [the sea]." And Pharaoh pursued them with his hosts, and they were overwhelmed by the sea which was destined to overwhelm them (20:77–78)

Thereupon We inspired Moses thus, "Strike the sea with your staff!" Whereupon it parted, and each part appeared like a mountain vast. And We caused the pursuers to draw near unto that place, and We saved Moses and all who were with him, and then We caused the others to drown (26:63–66).

And leave the sea becalmed [between you and Pharaoh's men]: for, verily, they are a host destined to be drowned!" (44:24).

At this juncture, these fine points are not required for the Qur'an's purpose is to remind Muslims of the depth of Allah's (ﷻ) love and consideration for those of His subjects who faced almost certain death and still did not forsake His cause.

Imagine the weak and ragged Israelis fleeing one of the mightiest military machines on earth — the “sole superpower” of the time — and arriving at the Red Sea with nowhere to go. At that critical moment, the Red Sea parts and the Israeli fugitives escape the apparent inevitability of their mass slaughter, with their mighty enemy unexpectedly destroyed in their stead. This is one of the scenes in the Qur’an that makes an everlasting impression on those who are able to visualize and contextualize it. The episode becomes all the more pertinent if it is related to the state of the world today, when the faithful face a secular modernity in which God means nothing, and come to terms with a global superpower as dominant, arrogant and ruthless as any faced by earlier peoples of scripture.

The Qur’an now embarks on a journey with the Children of Israel after their deliverance from Egypt,

And [remember] when We appointed for Moses forty nights [on Mount Sinai], and in his absence you took the [golden] calf [to worship], and thus became evildoers. Yet, even after that, We blotted out your sin, so that you might [have cause to] be grateful. And [remember] when We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ — and [thus] a standard [by which to discern the true from the false] — so that you might be guided aright; and [remember] when Moses said unto his people, “O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf; turn, then, in repentance to your Maker and mortify yourselves; this will be the best for you in your Maker’s sight.” And thereupon He accepted your repentance: for behold, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace (2:51–54).

The account of the Israelis turning to the calf is given in more detail in *Sūrah ṬāHa*, a Makkan *sūrah* that preceded this one in revelation but appears much later in the Qur’an. This shameful episode in their history came when they had only recently escaped

from slavery in Egypt, having crossed the Red Sea by a divine miracle. Yet it only took a few weeks' absence of Moses (ﷺ) for these Israelis to abandon their worship of the One God and turn instead to an idol of a calf. In the circumstances, this was nothing less than an act of betrayal, **“And you were evildoers.”**

Despite this, Allah (ﷻ) still forgave them and revealed to their prophet His divine scripture, a Torah that makes absolutely clear what is right and what is wrong. With such a scripture in their possession, they could have no more entanglements with evil, the prohibited, and the unlawful. But there was still a need for strict and stern punishment of those Israelis who had deviated so appallingly. **“And [remember] when Moses said unto his people, ‘O my people! Verily, you have offended yourselves by identifying with the calf; turn, then, in repentance to your Maker and execute yourselves; this will be the best for you in your Maker’s sight.’”** Allah’s (ﷻ) order here is for the Israelis to punish by death those within their ranks who had been responsible for the deification of the calf. By having an obedient Israeli striking down a disobedient one, Allah (ﷻ) purged their social order of deviant tendencies. This was, of course, a harsh punishment; the death penalty is always harsh but it becomes necessary for people who have institutionalized their deviation from One God. In the Yahūdī psyche, there can be no greater crime than killing another Yahūdī, even if he be a criminal of the highest order; indeed, such a killing is tantamount to suicide. But when the nature of the crime is so offensive, then the death penalty is heavenly sanctioned, testing the faith of those who felt their proximity to life was more intense than their proximity to Allah (ﷻ). The death penalty imposed on the Israelis was thus shock treatment for a people that were gravitating towards sin and corruption.

Had the Israelis enjoyed a civic *esprit de corps* they would not have identified with a false god in the absence of Moses (ﷺ). But, not having one, they fashioned a god out of a golden calf, which is an alarming indicator of their social failure to uphold the truth and to repudiate erroneous gods. And if they were not able to stop corruption by peaceful means then they were ordered from on high to

stop it by lethal means. This itself should have served as a historical precedent for these Children of Israel today, but as always they condemn themselves to repeating their mistakes.

Even after strict laws were imposed on them, they were still to experience further grace and care from Allah (ﷻ), **“And there-upon He accepted your repentance: for, behold, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.”** But Israel is Israel: a human mass of habitual, unyielding, materialistic thoughts, and an aversion to the “intangible” divine. Within this Israeli intellectual irredentism and all its earthly attractions these Israeli implacables ask to see Allah (ﷻ) with their own eyes! It was not the Israeli man in the street who asked to see Allah (ﷻ), it was the 70 notables, among their most outstanding characters! These 70 were selected by Musá (ﷺ) to go to Allah’s (ﷻ) appointment, the details of which are outlined in earlier Makkan *sūrah*s.

These commissioned few were so stubborn that they insisted on seeing Allah (ﷻ) before they would commit themselves to the faith of Moses (ﷺ). The Qur’an is presenting current-day Israelis with the moral profanity of their ancestors. This Qur’anic presentation compares their ancient blasphemous attitude with their contemporary contemptuous godlessness. And midway between the ancient and the present, they showed their vivid colors, intruding on Prophet Muhammad’s (ﷺ) mission and defying him to produce physical miracles for them. And not only that, they also instigated some committed Muslims to press the venerable Prophet (ﷺ) to furnish these miracles so that he could prove that he indeed is a prophet of Allah (ﷻ).

Referring to miracles, an immediate clarification is required here. *Miracles* have two definitions in the history of divine revelation. One is the pre-Muhammadi miracle that was the mainstay of the narrations of all the biblical Prophets (ﷺ). These are the physical miracles that were meant to shock and shake the viewer into a faithful bond with Allah (ﷻ). These miracles abound in the Israeli history before Muhammad (ﷺ). Such miracles are highlighted by the Qur’an in the details of the lives of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, among other Prophets of Allah (ﷻ). The parting of the Red Sea at

the time of Moses, the conversion of fire into “breeze and peace” when Abraham was thrown into it, the resurrection of the dead by Jesus (ﷺ), and the plethora of so many other physical miracles were a pre-Muhammadi means of winning the hearts of the Israelis and other people to the devotion and love of Allah (ﷻ).

But when the Muhammadi mission commenced, miracles were to gain a new definition. No longer were they physical miracles that defy the human senses in an immediate and direct way. In the post-Muhammadi era, miracles were “tucked into” the human action of commitment to Allah (ﷻ). By this definition, strange things would happen when committed Muslims would exhaust all their physical capabilities in pursuit of the divine will. Thus, when combatant Muslims were at the war-fronts and they would be the obvious underdogs and it would appear that they were about to be routed, then a miracle would happen in which angels would interfere on the side of the outnumbered committed Muslims.

The Israelis’ materialistic interpretation of a miracle meant that only a visual evidence of God’s power would “entice” them into a posture of divine devotion and dedication. By contrast, in the post-Muhammadi history of man, miracles interwoven into the fabric of human action and devotion to Allah (ﷻ) became proof positive of the kind of qualitative divine commitment that is essential for these opportune occurrences to happen. The demonstration of Allah’s (ﷻ) power in the form of timely miracles became a barometer for the faithful Muslims to measure the level of their commitment to Allah (ﷻ). This is to say that the post-Muhammadi timeline of revelation translocated the understanding of miraculous events from its man-centered and egocentric Israeli conceptualization back to its rightful theocentric place. We shall shed more light on this critical historical shift as we look further into the *āyāt* of this divine Writ.

And [remember] when you said, “O Moses, indeed we shall not believe you until we see God face to face!” Whereupon the thunderbolt of punishment overtook you before your very eyes. But We raised you again

after you had been as dead, so that you might have cause to be grateful. And We sent the clouds to comfort you with their shade, and sent down unto you *manna* and quails, [saying,] “Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance.” And [by all their sinning] they did no harm unto Us — but [only] against their own selves did they sin (2:55–57).

One can see by reading these *āyāt* that these Israelis cannot have a “feel” for God unless God himself is an object of their senses! They ask to reduce God to the dimensions of their 20/20 vision, and if He is not within that range, then they would absolve themselves from any relationship to Him. This is their way of making faith materialistic. Or it may be one of their psychological intractabilities to wiggle out of the commitments of a divine relationship. These stubborn Israelis were presented with many miracles, with countless acts of divine care, with multiple expressions of amnesty and forgiveness, but none of that could favorably and positively change their inveterate and intransigent character. This crass character believes only in the corporeal, the physical, and the tangible. In order to eradicate this historical Israeli truculent character of its deep-rooted pig-headedness, it had to be exposed to trials and tribulations.

On the other hand, it appears that institutionalized slavery in Egypt had penetrated deep into the psyche of the Israelis. The master mentality had gripped them so firmly that it left a permanent scar on their contact with the outside world. In a way it viscerally distorted their state of nature. And that is the effect of tyranny on people anywhere, anytime. The Israelis are human, and their response to official Egyptian despotism was such that they were the first human community that experienced the agonies and pains of resisting such tyranny until that resistance needed the interference of an outside power, the power of Allah (ﷻ). But instead of fighting to the bitter end, which was not a characteristic of the Israelis in Egypt, they succumbed to the dictatorship of the Pharaoh. And because they succumbed, they irreparably damaged their social psychology.

This fact is so obvious even today as the Israeli Zionist politicians are incapable of trusting “others,” especially the Palestinian, the Arab, or the Muslim “other.” Israeli inferiority began under the tyrannical administration of the Egyptian Pharaoh who endlessly and mercilessly humiliated and discriminated against them. After generations of third- and fourth-class citizenship the Israelis lost touch with the intrinsic virtues of morality, ethics, and humanistic mannerisms. These institutionalized Israeli slaves cultivated the art of circumvention, evasion and indifference. And the Egyptian tyranny responded, like all tyrannies, with the use of force to whip these slaves back into line every time they tried to hedge the laws of the land. In this cat-and-mouse game between the Israelis and the Egyptian superpower establishment, the Israelis would understand and respond to nothing but brutal force. In the absence of force, what had now become their apathetic psychological disposition avoided, at any cost, reliance upon an “intangible” God for deliverance from the Pharaonic superpower of Egypt. Even when Allah’s (ﷻ) help through the agency of His Messengers (ﷺ) came, they were unable to recognize it and respond to it because their power of discernment had been transformed into skepticism and cynicism.

One has to understand the negative attitude the Israelis harbored towards power, all sorts and versions of it. But some powers are definitely evil, while the power of Allah (ﷻ) is definitely good. They confused the power of the Pharaoh with the power of God; thus, when God presented Himself to them as a power they treated Him with disrespect and circumspection. That is why they displayed inflexibility, **“And [remember] when you said, ‘O Moses! We will not commit ourselves [to God] until we visualize Him with our own eyes!’”**

In proportion to this blasphemy Allah (ﷻ) responded to them while they were standing on that mount, **“You were stricken [and taken] by the thunderbolt while you were watching.”** Then once again Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy caught up with them, and they were granted the reprieve of living again so that they may show some thanks and appreciation. Here they were reminded of this heavenly favor, **“Then we brought you back to life, after your death, so that you**

may be grateful.” Then the divine words of the Qur’an reminded these Israelis of how easy they had it in the harsh environment of the desert, how sustenance and nourishment came their way without much effort or exertion. They were even spared the burning sun and the shifting sands, all courtesy of Allah’s (ﷻ) loving care, **“And We shaded you with clouds, and sent you *manna* and quails; eat of the wholesome [food] that We provided you as sustenance. And you did not offend Us, you [only] offended yourselves.”**

Historical scriptural accounts suggest that clouds would shield the Israeli nomads in the desert when they needed shade the most, when the heat was scorching. Anyone familiar with the desert knows that without clouds and water, without humidity and precipitation, the desert is an open oven. But with sufficient rainfall the desert may be transformed into a habitable place.

The history of scripture also indicates that these Israelis were provided, once again via the Mercy of Allah (ﷻ), with *manna*,⁵³ an edible substance similar in appearance to grain and with a taste as sweet as honey; they would find it covering the ground every morning. In addition, they were able to trap flocks of quail, a prime poultry meat to have in the barren desert. Thus, they combined delicious food with a comfortable environment. And all was theirs to have, luscious and *ḥalāl*. But were they grateful and thankful? The concluding words of the *āyah* indicate that they were delinquent and derelict. And the consequences of this thoughtless behavior would come back to haunt them, **“They did not do injustice to Us, they did injustice to themselves.”**

The penetrating words of the Qur’an pursue the contorted and distorted pursuits of the Israeli humbugs,

And [remember the time] when We said, “Enter this dominion, and eat of its food as you may desire, abundantly, but enter the passageway humbly and say, ‘Remove You from us the burden of our sins,’ [whereupon] We shall forgive you your sins, and shall amply reward the doers of good.” But those who were offenders substituted another statement for that which had

been given to them; and so We sent down upon those offenders a plague from heaven in requital for all their iniquity (2:58–59).

According to some historical narrations, the dominion referred to in this *āyah* is the holy haven (Bayt al-Muqaddis) in Jerusalem, a place that Allah (ﷻ) ordered the Children of Israel to access after their exodus from Egypt. And to enter therein, these Israelis would have to unseat the Amalekites. On the authority of the preponderant Israeli version of history, the Amalekites were an ancient nomadic people, notorious for their treachery, who lived south of Canaan. According to Genesis 36:12, they were descended from Esau. Whoever they were and whatever their lifestyle, the Children of Israel were instructed to move into that domain which was inhabited by “others.” And it is known from other detailing Qur’anic *āyāt* that these Children of Israel displayed cowardice and rationalized themselves out of a military encounter when the order was given. These Israelis said, **“O Moses! But therein live a superpower people. And we will not enter into that dominion until they leave it; once they depart we will enter”** (5:22). This was the same land they were entitled to when they were the bearers of God’s covenant, but they practically relinquished it by saying to Moses (ﷺ), **“We shall never enter that territory as long as those [superpower people] dwell in it. So go you and your Lord and do the fighting. We shall remain here, settled and static!”** (5:24).

For this reason Allah (ﷻ) compelled them to roam about and wander for 40 years without a homeland and without a country of their own. That brazen generation had to go, it had to die out, and when it did vanish, a new and fresh start began with Joshua (ﷺ), son of Nūn (Yehoshua in Hebrew). In the Israeli version of history, Joshua (ﷺ) came from the tribe of Ephraim. During the 40 years’ wanderings of the Israelis, he acted as the “minister” of Moses (ﷺ), and upon Moses’s (ﷺ) death was appointed to lead the people into Canaan. The Book of Joshua is named after him.

And as history would have it, the Israelis finally purged themselves of trepidation and entered this divinely allocated domain for

those who bear the covenant with the One God. But instead of moving into this domain in a spirit of humility, as they were ordered and instructed to do by Allah (ﷻ), and instead of asking Allah (ﷻ) to drain them of their sins and to cleanse them of any misconduct, they passed into that domain in a manner contrary to divine guidance. They even uttered words unbecoming for soldiers of divinity.

While the Yahūd are frantically scurrying around to purge historical books and documents of any “anti-Semitic” reference to their foul past, the Qur’an would seem like the only living document of “anti-Semitism” that is able to withstand the worldwide dragnet of B’nai Brith (Hebrew for ‘sons of the covenant’). This is one of the oldest and largest Yahūdī organizations. It was founded in the US and hides behind the label of educational and community activities, but really concerns itself with “the rights of the Jews” throughout the world. Included in the organization are the Hillel Foundation for Yahūdī college students, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) fashioned as a civil rights group, and B’nai Brith Women.

The words of justice from heaven do not frighten this Yahūdī cabal. It raises the mirror of their history to their faces so they and everyone else can see and learn from these lethal mistakes. Whether during, before or after Moses (ﷺ), these Israelis display a consistency of misbehavior, disobedience, defiance, and malfeasance. Whatever the other details are, the Qur’an is speaking to these Israelis about an affair of their own deviation with which they are familiar. It was Allah (ﷻ) who succored and supported them and made it possible for them to move into the appointed land. But He told them to move into it with modesty and meekness, while beseeching Him to forgive and pardon their excesses.

Allah (ﷻ) promised that, if they do that, He would excuse and acquit them. He would even multiply the rewards of those who would go the extra mile in satisfying Him. But, as usual, the Children of Israel flouted and frustrated the divine design, “**But the offenders reversed [revoked] what was said to them.**” The offenders here are the ones who are singled out because they misquoted what was in effect a divine address to *all* the Children of Israel, not

just to those who took it upon themselves to misdirect the words or the meaning of the divine communiqué.

“And We sent down on them a calamity from the sky because of their iniquity.” Notice that the words of the Qur’an are specific insofar as they define the target of the scourge: the offenders. As far as the nature of this disaster from on high, whether it was the plague, an infectious disease, a violent atmosphere targeting the offenders, or any other form of punishment, these details are not explained in the Qur’an. Whatever their authenticity, there are some traditions indicating that the disaster was a plague. The central point is that the offenders could not “get away with it.” And this is only one sample of divine justice checking Israeli transgressions.

Not only did Allah (ﷻ) provide food and shade for the Children of Israel in the despondent and desolate desert as a tangible and physical miracle for them literally to come to their senses, He (the Exalted and Supreme) miraculously provided them with gushing water through the agency of Moses (ﷺ). The Qur’anic scriptural words, yet again, remind them of this graceful miracle, and how they subsequently met Allah’s (ﷻ) generosity with their inherent Israeli insubordination,

And [remember] when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied, “Strike the rock with your staff!” Whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that all the people knew whence to drink. [And Moses said,] “Eat and drink the sustenance provided by Allah, and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption” (2:60).

Here is yet another scenario. Moses (ﷺ) asks Allah (ﷻ) for water to quench the thirst of his people in the desert. Moses (ﷺ) asks and Allah (ﷻ) delivers. How was this done? Moses (ﷺ) was instructed by Allah (ﷻ) to strike his staff on a particular rock, out of which, thereupon, water flowed from twelve springs equal to the twelve ancestral lines of the Children of Israel. These are the original twelve sons of Jacob (ﷺ) or Israel as they prefer to call him and

to whom they trace their lineages. These twelve ancestries constitute the clan of Israel. And these are the ones who are mentioned so often in the Qur'an. The original twelve sons of Israel are the chiefs of consanguinity. They maintained a tribal affinity then and these "descendants" of Israel claim an ethnic affinity today. The Yahūd have come a long way: they upgraded their affiliations from tribal to ethnic!

Then the *āyah* says, **"Each kindred knew whence to drink."** That is, each bloodline in this Israeli pedigree knew from which spring to drink. After witnessing and partaking of this Godly gift in the middle of nowhere, they were carefully and lovingly instructed, **"Eat and drink of Allah's sustenance, and do not instigate trouble in the land."** The Qur'an paints a visual image of these Israelis as they were moving on the austere terrain of a barren and at times rocky desert. Above them was a sky of heat and flames. In this unrelentingly harsh atmosphere, Allah (ﷻ) brings them running water, and the sky accords them *manna* and quail: a land of honey and game! But an Israeli decomposed psychology and a human nature gone awry was incapable of shouldering the responsibility of the divine mission. For this reason they had to endure the austerity of the heat, but they could not live with the details thereof.

Through the leadership of Moses (ﷺ), Allah (ﷻ) delivered them from conditions of inferiority and slavery to entrust them with the responsibility of administering the Holy Land, and to elevate them above their drudge and subordination. But as one can see through the words of the Qur'an, the desert Israelis could not bear the price of freedom.

Dignity has its cost. And this trust and covenant that Allah (ﷻ) has given them has its redeeming value. But these Israelis were not willing to pay the price, they were not willing to make the sacrifice, and they were not willing to redeem themselves. They could not even part with their trivial habits and customs. They were incapable of changing their diet and adapting to a new set of conditions and a new lifestyle, even if that meant they would be on their way to dignity, honor, and freedom. They wanted the variety of foods they were accustomed to in Egypt; they wanted lentils, gar-

lic, onions and cucumbers and whatever other varieties there are! The Qur'an reminds them of this in Madinah and today and wherever they are, as they brag about themselves,

And [remember] when you said, "O Moses, indeed we cannot endure but one kind of food; pray, then, to your Sustainer that He bring forth for us aught of what grows from earth — of its herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, its onions." Said Moses, "Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so much] better? Go back in shame to Egypt, and then you can you have what you are asking for!" And so ignominy and humiliation overshadowed them and they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation. They were afflicted with all this because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's messages and in slaying the Prophets against all right. Also because they rebelled [against Allah] and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right (2:61).

Moses (ﷺ) received their request with disapproval, "Do you exchange something superior for something inferior?" In other words, Moses (ﷺ) was telling them, "You mean to tell me that you are turning down Allah's (ﷻ) promotion for some trivial desire of yours!" Then, "...descend back into Egypt, and there you will have what you want." Moses (ﷺ) is saying, you need not pray to God for what you want, you can have it by returning to Egypt (the word *miṣr* could also mean any land besides the Holy Land where they might have found a variety of the gourmet and herbal foods they desired). The choice is yours: if you want choice foods and an inferior social status you can have it. You can find your condiments, seasonings, dressings, and spices; and you can partake of your fruits, vegetables, legumes, and beans. And in doing so you forfeit the grand responsibility bestowed on you from heaven: dignity and freedom in the Holy Land. Moses (ﷺ) was not short on renouncing them,

...And so indignity and insult overwhelmed them, and they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation. All this, because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's messages and in slaying the Prophets against all right; all this, because they rebelled [against Allah], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right (2:61).

Exodus (*a way out* from the Greek *exodos*), the deliverance of the People of Israel from slavery in Egypt, say many biblical scholars, happened in the 13th century BC under the leadership of Moses (ﷺ). This had a power definition and dimension to it. Exodus would come to mean that these people of Israel are no longer the underclass of another society and system. Exodus was a launching journey into liberation, independence and freedom. Further, along with this salvation and liberty were to follow the responsibilities of gaining power, and justly exercising it.

Exodus, more than designating the deliverance of the Israelis from Egyptian Pharaonic power and bondage, and their safe passage into Sinai and Palestine, was a seminal event in Israeli history. It could have empowered the Children of Israel to do God's will on earth had they obeyed and complied with Allah's (ﷻ) commandments and His revealed Word. But as the Qur'an repeatedly tells us, the Israelis seized upon every opportunity to turn back on God and wriggle out of His orders. Exodus occurred after the departure of the Israeli serfs from the Eastern Egyptian Delta, after they had been divinely emancipated from shameful servitude to the Pharaoh. Tenaciously articulated by ancient biblical poetry (Exodus, 15:1–18) and the prose of early Israeli cultic credos (Deuteronomy, 6:20–24, 26:5–9; Joshua, 24:2–13), this formative movement became the cornerstone of Israel's faith. Perceiving that through the Exodus they had been marvelously borne "on eagles' wings" (Exodus, 19:4), the Israelis recognized that they had been uniquely summoned as Yahweh's (God's) people. Since the biblical sites mentioned usually defy confident identification, the specific geography of Israel's departure from Egypt and its subsequent wandering in the wilderness remains mostly unknown.

If there is anything similar to Exodus in the Muhammadi sequence of Islam it would be the Hijrah. But nowhere in the specifics of the Hijrah do we find Arabs (not Arabians)⁵⁴ yearning for the “good old days” in Makkah, the way the Israelis were yearning for their “good old days” in Egypt. Arabs did not tell Muhammad (ﷺ) to call on Allah (ﷻ) to grant them of the earth’s herbs and gourmet the way Israelis beseeched Moses to pray for herbs, vegetables, seasonings, and spices! The followers in the camp of Moses (ﷺ) were broken spirits; long years of slavery had drained them of aspiration, ambition and initiative. Still, Allah (ﷻ) loved them and gave them food, sustenance, and provisions of quality and choice so that they may have hope and be motivated — but not these Israelis. Notice that Allah (ﷻ) did not provide the Muhājirūn traversing the Arabian desert any *manna* and quails, no clouds to shade them from a sun that burns and bakes more intensely than the one to the north in Sinai and Palestine.

Notice also that the pioneering Muslims of Prophet Muhammad’s (ﷺ) era were not inclined to deviate from identifying with Allah (ﷻ), as Mūsá’s (ﷺ) followers once did, in identifying with some golden calf, an idol, or any other earthly configured deity. And so when the Muhammadi Muslims arrived in Yathrib (Madinah) they were austere, self-controlled and valiant. It was their rigorous and self-denying discipline that qualified them to become heirs of the covenant, conquerors of egos, and a light unto the world.

Another distinction between the exodus of the Israelis from Egypt on the one hand and that of the Arabs from Makkah on the other hand is the threat factor. Once they had crossed the parting sea, the Israelis were safe; there was no longer an army or force pursuing them as the Pharaoh’s armed forces had drowned. But when the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had to escape from Makkah before he became a target for assassination by a coalition of Makkan tribes, he and his travelling companion, Abū Bakr, were pursued by their enemies. In both theatres — the Mosaic and the Muhammadi — miracles were an integral part of survival. The Mosaic miracle was the obvious physical and tangible parting of the sea, “**And [remember]**

We parted the sea for you, We delivered you, and We drowned the affiliates of Pharaoh while you were watching” (2:50).

The Israelis were watching and witnessing a miracle unfold in front of their very eyes. The sea opens up and they are permitted to pass through; they are followed by the hostile armies which attempt to cross through the cleavage in the sea but drown as the Israelis observe and stare at this awesome and breath-taking spectacle. The mightiest army on earth goes under the sea while the rag-tag slaves are finally saved and free. In the Muhammadi exodus from Makkah, he and his father-in-law to be, Abū Bakr, had to hide in a cave (the cave of Thawr) to escape the hot pursuit of the Qurayshī dragnet. And as the would-be assassins approach the hideout, heightening the tension and anxiety, the *āyāt* from on high detail that life and death moment,

If you do not support [the Apostle], then [know that Allah will do so — just as] Allah supported him at the time when the deniers [of Allah’s power] drove him away, [and he was but] one of two: when these two were [hiding] in the cave, [and] the Apostle said to his companion, “Grieve not! Verily, Allah is with us.” And thereupon Allah bestowed upon him from on high His [gift of] inner peace, and supported him with invisible forces, and degenerated the cause of the deniers [of Allah’s power], whereas the cause of Allah remained supreme, for Allah is Almighty, Wise (9:40).

During the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah, there are many other miracles that occurred and they shall be outlined in due course. The lesson here, as many contemporary Muslims and even their preachers and teachers fail to notice, is the difference between the physical miracles presented to the Israelis throughout their sensuous history and materialistic approach to God and the supra-physical miracles that were presented to the Muslims in an intangible and delicate way, a way that was paved by Muslim intentions and actions. Miracles in the post-Israeli history were no

longer incentives for belief and faith, they became *ipso facto* proof of commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and confidence in Him.

So when *khatibs*, imams, and clergymen expound on Islamic historical events, or even contemporary ones, while underlining and highlighting the physically miraculous, they are in fact those whose minds and hearts have not lived through the Muhammadi experience. They sound more like the sages of Israel than the ‘alims of Muhammad (ﷺ).

We dare say that, in the history of mankind, there has been no collection of human beings who have tainted their heritage with as much impropriety, rudeness, enmity, and denial of the agency of prophethood as these Israelis. They have no rival in the way and in the magnitude of their effrontery to God. They actually killed, slaughtered, slashed, severed, and sliced the Prophets (ﷺ) to death. This is the most heinous crime committed by any nation against those who were commissioned by God to communicate His Word. Israeli denial of the truth and the power of God is ghastly and grotesque. Their disobedience is ugly and abhorrent. Their record in this regard is unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

With all this blight and spoliation on their record they have the audacity to lay far and wide claims to their credit! They in the past and in the present claim to be the only guided race in history and in the universe. They claim to be God’s chosen people; heavenly awards are due to them and only to them. God’s privilege belongs to them, and only to them. God does not associate others with the Israelis. They are one of a kind! The Qur’an disproves, discredits and denounces all of this egocentric religiosity.

The Qur’anic scripture announces a broad principle of divine order, a principle encountered in so many narratives in the Qur’an. This principle is the integral nature of human-to-divine commitment. This inherent and holistic character of the covenant is confirmed only when the human complies with Allah (ﷻ), commits himself to Him, cultivates actions that are rightful and righteous, does works that are beneficial and helpful, and brings forth energy that is positive and constructive.

This principle says that Allah's (ﷻ) privilege is not a monopoly of any tribe, bloodline or breed. Divine privilege was not and is not the propriety of a clan or a colour. Rather, divine privilege belongs to all and any who commit themselves to the One God, from time temporal to time immemorial. All peoples, of whatever historical era, are responsible for the heavenly guidance presented to them until that version of the guidance is updated with the following version,

Indeed, those who are committed to [the power of] Allah [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Judaic faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians — all who are observant of Allah's covenant and the Last Day and do honorable deeds — shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve (2:62, 5:69).

Those who are committed to (the power of) Allah (ﷻ) are the Muslims. And those who follow the Judaic faith are not the Israeli-centrics who have virtually made religion a hereditary birthright. The Christians are the true followers of Jesus (ﷺ) and not the subservients of Caesar — then or now. The Sabians may be those Arabians who in pre-Islamic times were still followers of the Abrahamic faith but were not committed to the mainstream ungodly beliefs of the Arabian society prior to the Qur'anic advent. The Arabian *mushriks* thus defined them as *al-ṣābi'ah*, which means deviants from the ancestral religion. Interestingly enough, these same Arabian *mushriks* tried to label the Muslims with the same word, without success.

This *āyah* radiates with the meanings of an inclusive covenant that binds together the followers of all those historical expressions of commitment to Allah (ﷻ) that honored the bond with Allah (ﷻ), that anticipated the Final Day and that performed distinguished and accredited deeds. They will all be compensated by their Lord and they shall neither regret nor will they fear.

The crux of the matter is this contractual bond with Allah (ﷻ); it is not an issue of race or nationality. With the revelation of

the last heavenly Scripture, the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) has given mankind the last and concluding covenant that supersedes and includes all previous covenants with Allah (ﷻ), the One and the Singular God of all eras and all races.

Remember all these *āyāt* were announced in Madinah as Yahūd were watching and listening. These *āyāt* were uncovering the historical truth about Yahūd and how they are prone to mistreat Prophets (ﷺ), twist the meanings of scripture, and take issue with God Himself. The Muslims in Madinah, like the Muslims should be nowadays, were listening to these expository *āyāt* and also raising their guard with respect to the nature and attitude of Yahūd around them in Madinah. And here again come other *āyāt*, undressing the Yahūdī disguise,

And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising the Mount high above you, [and saying,] “Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and bear in mind all that is therein, so that you might remain conscious of Allah!” And you turned away after that! And had it not been for Allah’s favor upon you and His grace, you would surely have found yourself among the losers (2:63–64).

The details of this solemn pledge are outlined in other *sūrah*s as well as in the coming *āyāt* of this *sūrah*. What is important here is to visualize this spectacular event at this moment in time. It is important to notice the symmetry between the psychological and expressive dimension relevant to the magnitude of the power to levitate a mountain above their heads and the power of determination to be earnest about their solemn pledge. This was a dead serious affair; it required their undivided attention and devotion.

The issue of the covenant is never to be taken lightly. It tolerates no vacillation or equivocation. It is the covenant of Allah (ﷻ) with His bonding and committed humans. It is earnest and serious; it supersedes all other relationships. It is truth for existence, the truth about existence, and the truth in existence. And it all entails dire responsibilities and demanding obligations.

But that is in the nature of these things. When humans resolutely bind and attach themselves to Allah (ﷻ), they should not anticipate “an easy ride.” The human entity has to husband all its abilities and potentials to live up to the divine standard. When this affinity and affiliation is taken to heart and it defines the human character, then the attractions of the world become faint. The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), after receiving the first words of revelation and knowing what this human-in-the-mold-of-Allah (ﷻ) meant, describes this most eloquently in a few words with his wife Khadijah, “*maḍá ‘ahdu al-nawm yā Khadijah: O Khadijah, the time of casualness is over.*”⁵⁵

Allah (ﷻ) forewarned the noble Messenger (ﷺ), “**Behold, We shall bestow upon you a weighty message” (73:5).** This was exactly what was communicated to the Children of Israel when Allah (ﷻ) said, “**Take very seriously and ardently what We have given you. And bear in mind all that is therein so that you may guard against Allah.**”

In addition to the heightened sense of motivation and determination there also has to be a mental understanding of the significance of these miraculous events that abound in the history of the descendants of Israel. Their purpose and reason has to be identified: lives have to adjust to the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is present, that He is approachable, that He is available, and that He is concerned. Otherwise the Israeli responses to these miracles amount to nothing but unguided zeal, a frenzy of fanaticism, and a discharge of random and reckless energy.

But Allah’s (ﷻ) covenant is no such thing. It is tantamount to a course for life itself that begins in man’s heart as a concept and feeling, then flows out into life as an arrangement and an order. In between the heart and humanity there is a mannerism and a behavior that is fashioned by this covenant. The highest order of this human behavior is *taqwá*, the ever-present feeling and anticipation of Allah’s (ﷻ) preeminence and power.

But no trace of that is to be found in these self-styled Children of Israel. Their true nature asserts itself on every occasion. They miss no opportunity to miss every opportunity, “**And you turned away**

after that.” And one more time, after the many other previous times, Allah’s (ﷻ) grace and affection rescued them from an impending punishment and doom, **“Had it not been for Allah’s graciousness upon you and His grace you would have been losers.”**

The Qur’an, Allah’s (ﷻ) guiding scripture, does not quit exposing this Israeli character. Their quintessential selves are on display for all to take notice. And on this theme, take note of the rulers who govern today’s Muslims of the Islamic East. These rulers are apparently aloof from these Qur’anic words of wisdom. Do our kings and presidents, policy- and decision-makers try to understand Allah’s (ﷻ) words? Their strategies proclaim with roaring declarations that they do not hear or listen to what Allah (ﷻ) has to say about Banū Isrā’īl. If these tin-pot dictators were tuned into the Qur’an they would not have had a Madrid Conference (1991CE); they would not have had the Oslo Accords (1993 & 1995CE); and they would not have had the American “sponsored” peace process, which is leading them in every Israeli direction. They would not have signed peace agreements and peace accords from Camp David to who knows what is next. But our excellencies and highnesses have no ear or heart for Allah’s (ﷻ) words and guidance, much akin to the Israelis these *āyāt* refer to. No wonder these high ranking Arabian and Muslim officials feel more comfort with the Zionist interest than with their own Muslim peoples and constituencies.

The Israeli Yahūd make no apologies for themselves; yet our “statesmen” from Fahd to Laḥd try to convince Muslims, as if they do not comprehend the Qur’an, that there is a change of heart in the Israeli camp!⁵⁶ They want to argue that Judaism and Zionism are two separate and “opposite” things. The question here is why are the “Muslim” rulers and their court scholars developing this argument when it is not found coming from the Yahūd or the Zionists themselves? A funny world we live in: Arabian *ṭāghūti* rulers indoctrinate the Muslims about who is a Zionist and who is a Jew, while the Yahūdī experts and commentators indoctrinate the Jews and Christians about who is a Muslim “moderate” and who is a Muslim “extremist.”

This is what happens when Muslims are withdrawn from the Qur'an and its relevant meanings. Never did the Prophet (ﷺ) make an argument in Madinah, nor does the Qur'an carry any *āyāt*, implying that Yahūd in Madinah are different from the Yahūd in the Qur'an. Where is there in the Qur'an and Sunnah a dissimilarity between the Banū al-Naḍīr, Banū Qaynuqā', and Banū Qurayzah (the Yahūdī inhabitants of Madinah who lived alongside the Aws and the Khazraj) on the one hand and the Children of Israel who are mentioned in the Qur'an on the other? Even if the Qur'anic meanings are not duly absorbed, should not the lessons of history be pertinent? Multiple sources of history demonstrate that Israeli clannish mentality is so fanatical about its continuity that it has not given the human race one incident in which it accepted blame for covenant violating infractions. These Israelis have concocted conspiracies against Prophets (ﷺ), they established hostility to the Islamic State in Madinah, and now their modern Zionist manifestation has declared war on Islam and its covenant bearers, but who amongst them, past or present, owns up to their chronically insolent opposition to Allah (ﷻ)?

The Qur'an drives this lesson home so clearly and so dearly that it is only an idiotic, brainless, and obtuse Muslim who does not understand or wish to understand this major theme in the Qur'an. If Yahūd have the audacity to betray and defraud Allah (ﷻ), they will have the audacity to betray and defraud humans whose humanity is, as a matter of Talmudic knowledge, less than the humanity of Yahūd.⁵⁷ This authentic account of past Israeli transgressions is repeatedly underscored in the Qur'an because the historical forgery presented by Yahūd is so strong and compelling. As Yahūd control powerful instruments of advocacy, obfuscation and revisionism, the truth about their arrogant and dissembling traits has a hard time getting out; thus it takes this consistent Qur'anic exposure of their nature to convince the passive and indifferent Muslim, not to mention the ignorant and naive "Islamist."

For those who are slow at learning, the Qur'an pulls out of history yet another Israeli betrayal of the Covenant to highlight their cheating, infidelity and fragile attachment to Allah (ﷻ).

They emerge as covenant-weaking humans who bind with immediate, personal, and worldly interests rather than with the covenant of God,

For you are well aware of those from among you who profaned the Sabbath, whereupon We said unto them, “Be as apes despicable!” And We set them up as a warning and example for their time and for all times to come, as well as an admonition to all who are conscious of Allah [’s power] (2:65–66).

The details of this Israeli violation of the Sabbath are elucidated in *Sūrah al-A’raf*,

And ask them about that town which stood by the sea: how its people would profane the Sabbath whenever their fish came to them, breaking the water’s surface, on a day on which they ought to have kept Sabbath — because [the fish] would not come to them on other than Sabbath days! Thus did We try them by means of their [own] iniquitous doings. And whenever some people among them asked [those who tried to restrain the Sabbath-breakers], “Why do you preach to people whom Allah is about to destroy or [at least] to chastise with suffering severe?” Those [who tried to restrain the Sabbath-breakers] would answer, “In order to be free from blame before your Sustainer, and that these [transgressors, too,] might become conscious of Him.” And thereupon, when those [sinners] had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We saved those who had tried to prevent the doing of evil, and overwhelmed those who had been bent on evildoing with dreadful suffering for all their iniquity; and then, when they disdainfully persisted in doing what they had been forbidden to do, We said unto them, “Be as apes despicable!” (7:163–166)

These Israelis wanted and asked for a holy day in which they could rest and relax. So God designated Saturday as their day of holiness in which, once again, their transitory commitment to God would be tested. The *āyāt* above are alluding to the fact that the major commerce in the town next to the sea was fishing. The test of the Israelis' commitment is related to the development that the fish were only abundant on Saturdays, a day on which the Israelis were prohibited from fishing! On the other days of the week, there was hardly any catch around. This Saturday profit tugged at the greed strings of Yahūd. They could not live with losing a profit on Saturday, even if that meant losing the ties to the Covenant. The dynamics of acquisitiveness went to work. How can we miss this moneymaking opportunity on Saturday? There is money to be made, and besides, how much is the Covenant with God paying us anyway? What is the worth of an abstract Covenant compared to tangible wealth and fortune? Here again the rebellious Yahūdī character shines.

They could not resist this commercial temptation. They were itching to violate the Sabbath, and they did just that, but in their own peculiar roundabout sort of way. The Sabbath-breakers would set their nets in the streams on Saturday to entrap the surging schools of fish while simultaneously cutting them off from returning to sea where they would be out of reach. So technically the Sabbath-skeptics did not remove the fish from the water on Saturday; all they did was entrap the fish. Once Saturday passed, they would go and retrieve their prize — the confined fish.

“Suitably, We said to them, ‘Be obnoxious apes.’” There is quite a bit of literature on whether these covenant violators were physically transformed into apes or their behavior and conduct was reduced to the bestial level of instinct-centered apes. The fact of the matter remains that they were reduced from the higher consciousness of humans who are dignified by their covenant with Allah (ﷻ) to low-level humans who are more akin to beasts, animal instincts, and impulses.

The highest distinction of a covenant human lies in his extraordinary willpower. But if the Israeli affinity to money and

wealth are more of a determining factor in their decisions than a determination to obey God, then the animalistic tendency of instant gratification overwhelms the lofty human potential. This classification the Israelis deserved because of their weak resolve and gluttonous insatiability.

Now, whether these Israeli lawbreakers were literally transfigured into apes or they were reduced in their mental and psychological spheres into impersonating the characteristics of apes and monkeys is a question that has not been settled in the many *tafsirs* this writer has come across. But it does beg a serious probe.

In today's world (of the 20th/21st centuries CE), there circulates widely what is called the Theory of Evolution or simply the concept of Evolutionism. Becoming a widely held 19th-century belief, the theory says that organisms — individual races, and even societies — were intrinsically bound to improve themselves, that changes were progressive, and that acquired characteristics could be transmitted genetically. Charles Darwin (1809–82CE), said to be the explicator of natural selection, wrote a book about the subject, his major work, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859CE). Later he worked on a series of supplemental treatises, including the *Descent of Man* (1871CE), which postulated the descent of the human race from the anthropoid group (a group of primates comprising monkeys and apes).

The Theory of Evolution was originally proposed by Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace. Later Darwin expanded it in his book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. According to Darwin, individuals of a species show variation. On average more offspring are produced than are needed to replace the parents, but population size remains, more or less, stable in nature. There must therefore be competition for survival, and it is the best-adapted (fittest) variants that survive and reproduce. Evolution occurs by means of natural selection acting on individual variation, where the individuals with the most highly adaptable characteristics pass them on to the next generation, resulting in the survival of the fittest. The discovery of the genetic mechanism causing variation has resulted in a modified version of the theory, known as neo-Darwinism.

According to this Darwinian knack, “natural selection” is the complex process by which the totality of environmental factors determine the non-random and differential reproduction of genetically different organisms. It is viewed as the force which directs the course of evolution by preserving those variants or traits best adapted to survive.

Over the past several decades, more and more impressionable people have been socialized to the understanding that Darwinism or the Theory of Evolution is fact. The last few generations of educated classes of people have been schooled to *believe* that the human race is descended from animals. Accordingly, our immediate ancestors from the animal kingdom are monkeys and apes — the chimpanzees and gorillas! Even some mentally-alienated Muslims are convinced they can reconcile this animalistic origin of man to the Qur’an! And, in the best tradition of condescending Western criticism, they disparage any contrarian Muslim who would defend or promote the concept of “creationism,” which states that man is independently created by God and is not a refined biological extension of the animal kingdom. Any Muslim who dares to make this argument will be barraged with the usual routine accusations of being backward, anachronistic, uncivilized, uncultured, ignorant, or stupid.

Not included in this discussion are the resulting spin-off “theories” characterizing God’s existence as void and inconsequential because the world and life are in no need of God. Charles Darwin has been portrayed by those who revere him as a dispassionate agnostic or a detached scientist looking for the truth. Like all people, he was influenced by the ambiance that informed his views on things of importance, especially in the case of Darwin, by the philosophical constructs of human nature postulated by René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Running concurrently to the emergence of man-centered ideological orientations was the deconstruction of Church doctrine and dogma. Within these cross currents of the European secession from God, Darwin was known to have said in an autobiographical quote (probably made in 1876),

Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress, and have never since doubted for a single second that my conclusion was correct. I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.⁵⁸

Darwin's theory simply gained favor not because its basic tenets were empirically verifiable, but because it was presented as a set of ideas connected to progress in a social and intellectual environment that was ready for such ideas. Many biologists by 1859 were already reconciled with evolution; however they may not have been godless evolutionists — and this was Darwin's critical contribution. He suggested that there was no supernatural agency or intelligence governing the biological expansiveness of life, that natural selection acting on individual variation all happened by chance. Thus what was radical about Darwinism was not evolution as much as it was an argument for materialism.

Social Darwinism signalled the formal end of Church influence on the European intellectual mindset. Ideological doctrines gradually supplanted the Church as the determiners of human social and communal behavior. Social theories founded upon the understanding that man is strictly an instinctual being emerged with the works of Freud, Marx, Engels, Durkheim, Nietzsche, Keynes and others. Further, these theories excluded God from having any influence on the behavior of man. Hence God's rules for regulating human life were simply unnecessary; man would now make up his own rules (or rather some men, perhaps those men who were better suited to survive, would formulate the rules for all the other men). Thus began the atheistic ideological age in Europe, the so-called modernist era, owing the bulk of its success and infusion into the European body politic to the groundbreaking Theory of Evolution. Not parenthetically, it should be noted that Karl Marx, shared some

correspondence with Charles Darwin in a desire to dedicate the first printing of *Das Kapital* to him. Whether or not this actually happened has been hard to verify; nonetheless both were contemporaries and shared a mutual affection for one another.

In this whole argument of evolution versus creation, there seems to be a blind spot. There are Muslim and Christian clergymen debating this issue back and forth, but conspicuously absent are the rabbis. Where are they in this heated exchange of ideas? They seem to have conveniently gone AWOL. Could it be that behind the scenes they are rubbing their hands and twinkling their eyes at the banal arguments of gentile people whose academic discourses demonstrate an incapacity to ascertain whether humans are of a unique origin or of some ape?

It has become a mark of sophistication and education to insist that man evolved from primitive forms through the more complex forms of life until he reached his human form. So, it is chic to claim that man is an offspring of animals and beasts. But it is “anti-Semitic” and particularly offensive to say that somewhere in the developmental and experiential history of man, the Israeli man — due to his violation of the most important relationship with the Creator, the One God, and due to his contentiousness with the Covenant — was transmuted into an animal!

Indeed, between the evolutionary and creationist views of man, there is a clash of culture, tradition, and history. In the secular, material, wild, and wanton interpretation of man, agencies around the world — governmental, educational, socio-political and public interest — hold that science “proves” man or the human race is an offshoot of the animal kingdom. In a sense, apes and gorillas are human cousins, relatives, and ancestors. And if one really educated himself, he will begin to figure out that lizards, frogs, and fish are also his very distant progenitors and sires! Thus with all animals being part of the extended human family in a sense, is there any question left as to why humans should care for the animals in the jungles and those in the seas? The dying liberal hearts of this humanistic (or should we say troglodyte) persuasion bleed when endangered species are mentioned! God forbid! Or is it

Darwin forbid! Policies have to be changed, action has to be taken, and everyone has to be involved lest a particular type of fish disappears from the corals of the sea.

But as for humans who have become endangered species in their own homes and lands, well, these are savages anyway. The Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Lebanon, Kashmir, and Somalia, not to mention the native populations of the Americas, Africa, Australia, and countless other places are barbarians, Neanderthals and philistines. They deserve to die and their death should be celebrated by all the “civilized” peoples of the world!

The primates of the jungle and the cetaceans of the sea have become, according to public opinion standards formulated within this perverse view of reality, more worthy of respect, sympathy and concern than the Semites of Arabia, Palestine and all the surrounding areas! Did this all happen per chance, or is there a mind behind all of this, a human mind that has no problem dehumanizing Semites (other than Yahūd) while humanizing animals who were transmuted as apes and monkeys?

“And set them up as a warning example for their time and for all times to come, as well as an admonition to all who are at guard [against God’s retribution]” (2:66). This dehumanization of man by the Israelis is not a once-in-a-history event. It is a permanent feature of their ugly collective psychology. In the past few months these Israelis have produced more than enough evidence testifying that the Qur’anic words are as vibrant and as meaningful as they were the instant they were disclosed.

Some years ago, it was reported that an Israeli Yahūdī woman drew a picture of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a pig (*nastaghfir-allāh*).⁵⁹ When she was taken to court in occupied Palestine and tried and sentenced to two years in confinement, she commented that her handiwork was for the land and people of Israel. To add insult to injury, her defense lawyer said that with “good conduct” she could be out of prison in a few months. All those familiar with Israeli “justice” know that it will probably be sooner than even that.

In another incident, some Israeli gangsters threw a pig’s head into the courtyard of al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.⁶⁰ They were trying to ignite

a clash with Muslims hoping to escalate it into a conflict that would result in the destruction of the Masjid. And in yet another recent incident, the Israelis had an elderly Muslim worshipper go through a metal detector at al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. The detector beeped because the old man was wearing a belt with a large metal buckle. The Israeli soldiers ordered him to take off his belt and go pray without it. The old man pleaded he would not be able to pray without the belt because the belt supports his trousers. Bringing out their true Israeli elitist imperiousness, the soldiers forced him at gunpoint to take off all his clothes. They rendered him naked at the entrance to the Masjid and exposed him to public shame and humiliation in front of all places, a holy sanctuary!⁶¹

Muslims, take stock of this Israeli nature. Do not fool yourselves and gloss over these *āyāt* of the Qur'an as they *are* the facts of life. The *tafsīr* of these *āyāt* describes the conduct of Banū Isrā'īl, past and present, **“And We set them up as an omen for their time and for all times to come, as well as a reprimand to all who are sensitive to Allah [’s power].”**

Haggling as a Device for Escaping Accountability

At the conclusion of these explicative *āyāt* and the penetrating insight into the dark crevices of Israeli nature, comes the anecdote of the cow. *Sūrah al-Baqarah* derives its name from this narrative, presented here in short story form. Unlike the preceding details of Israeli guile, which are further outlined in other *sūrah*s, the chronicle of the cow is delineated here only, not being mentioned in the Makkan *āyāt*. This Israeli episode with the cow elucidates more forcefully their propensity for argumentation, obstruction, and procrastination; they are always able to look for rationalizations, modifications, and vindications. This is an Israeli second nature,

- **And lo! Moses said unto his people, “Behold, Allah bids you to sacrifice a cow.” They said, “Do you mock at us?” He answered, “I seek refuge with Allah against being so ignorant!”**

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا
 أَنْتَجِدْنَا هُزُوعًا قَالِ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا
 ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ
 عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ
 يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاءٌ فَاقِعٌ
 لَوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ
 الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا
 بَقَرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شِيَةَ فِيهَا
 قَالُوا آتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فذَبْحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِذْ
 قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَدْرَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَقُلْنَا
 أَضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ
 قَسْوَةً وَإِن مِّن الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِن مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقُقُ
 فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِن مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ
 عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

- Said they, “Pray on our behalf unto your Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like.” [Moses] replied, “Behold, He says it is to be a cow neither old nor immature, but an age in-between. Do, then, what you have been bidden!”
- Said they, “Pray on our behalf unto your Sustainer that He make clear to us what her colour should be.” [Moses] answered, “Behold, He says it is to be a yellow cow, bright of hue, pleasing to the beholder.”
- Said they, “Pray on our behalf unto your Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like, for to us all cows resemble one another; and then, if Allah so wills, we shall truly be guided aright!”
- [Moses] answered, “Behold, He says it is to be a cow not broken-in to plow the earth or water the crops, free of fault, without markings of any other colour.” Said they, “At last you have brought out the truth!” And thereupon they sacrificed her, although they had almost let it undone.
- For, [O Children of Israel,] because you had slain a human being and then cast the blame for this [crime] upon one another — although Allah will bring to light what you would conceal.
- We said, “Strike it [the corpse] with portions of it [the cow].” In this way Allah saves lives from death and shows you His will, so that you might [learn to] use your reason.”
- And yet, after all this, your hearts hardened and became like rocks, or even harder. For, behold, there are rocks from which streams gush forth; and, behold, there are some from which, when they are cleft, water issues; and, behold, there are some that fall down for awe of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do! (al-Baqarah:67–74).

The way the Qur’an narrates this short story stimulates certain perspectives. One divulges the core ethos, the genetic disposition, and the quarrelsome moods of the Israelis. Another perspective demonstrates Allah’s (ﷻ) creative power, the momentum of resurrection and the nature of life and death. Still a third perspective

resonates with meticulous and communicative meanings as they are superbly and inimitably delivered.

The defining features of the Israeli mettle are so pronounced in this incident: their hearts are far away from the source of faith, confidence in God, and divine commitment. They have no fervor or resolve for anything their Prophets tell them to do. They are slow and sluggish in responding. They are quick to produce excuses and alibis. They also are profusely liberal in their mockery and bad-mouthing of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ). Their hearts are dull but their tongues are sharp!

Their prophet told them, **“Indeed, Allah orders you to slaughter a cow.”** That was it, nothing more, nothing less. Go find a cow and then slay it. Their prophet rescued them from a life of sweat and tears, from torture and persecution; he did all this with Allah's (ﷻ) care and mercy, with Allah's (ﷻ) instruction and direction. Their prophet's leadership through the most unforgiving of circumstances gave these Israelis ample opportunity to experience unmatched human qualities they could trust. After accompanying and guiding them through all this hardship, should this very prophet tell them that God wants something to be done, then he would not be fabricating or fantasizing.

If God says the Israeli Children should sacrifice a cow, then that is exactly what they should do. Book closed. But how did these Israelis respond? They accused their honorable prophet of making fun of them and ridiculing them, as if Prophets (ﷺ) are capable of abusing the Word of God. Prophets are above attributing false things to God. Even righteous and saintly humans would never do such a thing, not to speak of God's Apostles and Messengers (ﷺ). This was how they intransigently responded to Moses (ﷺ), **“Do you scoff at us?”** Moses (ﷺ) answered this imprudence by asking for Allah's (ﷻ) defense. He sought to coach them with discretion to Allah's (ﷻ) command. He told them that their suspicion is applicable only to one who is ignorant of Allah's (ﷻ) determination, a person who is void of standard morality, **“He said, ‘I seek Allah's shelter against being so insolent.’”** This should have been enough. At this point the Israelis should have taken Moses' (ﷺ)

word at face value and found a cow to slay. They should have been embarrassed by the impudence of their unbecoming exclamation with Moses (ﷺ), but not in the case of Israel's Israelis.

They were quite capable of finding and sacrificing any cow since they were not short of means. Had they done so, they would have obeyed Allah (ﷻ) by carrying out Moses' (ﷺ) instructions. But in such circumstances, when they perceive others, even if it is their own prophet, "bossing them around," then they revert to their haggling and wagging. They begin to throw out their questions, **"They said, 'Pray to your Sustainer so that He may explain to us what kind of cow is it.'"**

This type of question suggests they still felt that Moses (ﷺ) was somehow belittling them. First they said, "Pray to your Sustainer for us." The words "*your Sustainer*" infer that the Israelis in some way considered themselves not to be included in this whole affair. Had there been a unity of purpose they would have said "*our Sustainer*." Their exclusive nature was so fanatical that it was not even willing to accommodate Moses (ﷺ) into its inner most sense of being. Moses (ﷺ) was one of them, a product of their own ethnic genetic heritage.

How could anyone expect these types to include Muslims among them? The Israelis never had and still do not have the capacity to be inclusive. "Israel and inclusive" is an oxymoron. The way they formulated their request insinuates that God is the God of Moses (ﷺ) and not theirs; as if this whole affair was limited to God and Moses (ﷺ) and they had nothing to do with it. Moreover, to ask Allah (ﷻ) about the kind of cow was an attempt to harass Moses (ﷺ). What do they mean, "What type of cow is it?" A cow is a cow; they should pick any cow, slaughter it, and get the whole issue over with. Moses (ﷺ) said "*a cow*," which means any cow in the world, as long as it is a cow, and not a hen or a sheep!

It should be noted here that the Israelis in their saga with the cow were ordered to slaughter a cow and not another sacrificial animal such as a goat or a camel. This selection of a cow for slaughter could very well have been a way of breaking their attachment to

the golden calf. Slaughtering a cow would also be a disincentive for any human who would be inclined to worship cows.

Moses (ﷺ) tried his best to lead them gently. He did not rebuke a question with another question and enter into a sterile argument with them. He answered them like a mature teacher who is challenged by misbehaving pupils. He said, **“Behold, He [Allah] says it is to be a cow neither old nor immature, but of an age in-between.”** This cow should neither be too old nor too young, of middle age. Then Moses (ﷺ) added some words of advice to this general description, **“Do, then, what you are told to do.”** This should have been enough. After such words from Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) they should have sensed that they were pushing this whole affair out of bounds. At this point they could have found a middle-aged cow and sacrificed it, and it would all have been over. But Israeli nature is Israeli nature.

They went on asking and pestering, **“They said, ‘Ask your Sustainer to tell us what colour is she.’”** Once again they exhorted him to ask *his* Sustainer, as if God is not *their* Sustainer. They were trying to drill into Moses’ (ﷺ) mind that this was an affair between him and God, and that they have nothing to do with it? It is this indirect form of Israeli speech in contrast to their direct talk that does more harm. And now that these Israelis had opened up this whole issue to matters of details, specifics and nuances, they got what they were asking for.

“Said [Moses], ‘He [God] says it is a yellow cow of a bright colour that pleases the viewer.’” When these Israelis confined their latitude of choices they were given the corresponding confining answers. Earlier they had the freedom to pick any cow; now they had to seek out an unusual one. It had to be middle aged; it could not be shabby, rundown, or worn-out; and it also could not be youthful, tender, and undeveloped. And then it had to be of a bright yellow colour. More than that, it could not be lean or thin, it could not have deformities or infirmities. It has to charm the spectators. And to captivate the onlookers you need a cow whose vitality and physique are resplendent. People are always impressed by these characteristics: vitality, energy, pep, ebullience, and

health. Conversely, people tend to keep their distance from infirmity, disease, malady, and emaciation.

One would think this is enough haranguing; but no, there is still more Israeli stonewalling. They continued to make things harder for themselves. They had a license to do such things without restrictions and conditions, yet they incurred strict constraints and limitations because of their attitude. And once more they went back and asked about what kind and type of cow it is, **“They said, ‘Beseech your Sustainer to tell us what sort of cow is it?’”** They even apologized for being so procrastinating, **“Cows look alike to us.”** But this time, it seems, they began to notice they have gone too far, and they relented, **“And then, if God wills, we will be truly guided.”**

When these Israeli spirits nagged and henpecked concerning exactly the kind of cow God had chosen, they but made finding that cow more difficult and complex for themselves. They were running themselves out of choices by forcing new answers that would severely limit their options. They could have spared themselves the whole constrictive issue had they just accepted any cow as they initially were bade to do.

“Moses said, ‘God tells [you] it is an undomesticated cow that does not plow the earth nor waters the crops, it has no blemish or flaw.’” Finally at this point, the cow the Israelis should have sought was not only in midlife, not only of an eye-catching yellow colour, but now in addition to all that it had to be a thoroughbred cow that had neither plowed the earth nor been used for agricultural irrigation. Its colour had to be solid, flawless and unmixed. It was at this exhaustive point, after all complexity has set in, while the conditions mounted, and the range narrowed that these Israelis declared, **“Now you have conveyed the truth.”**

Now! As if all that preceded was short of truth, or as if, during this extended argumentative ordeal, they did not feel sure that Moses (ﷺ) was communicating the truth. And they finally sacrificed it, but only hardly. After they executed the divine order and solemn duty, Allah (ﷻ) disclosed the purpose of His command,

Recall, that you [the Children of Israel] committed the crime of killing and then evaded the issue of culpability; but Allah shall disclose your reticence. So We said, “Strike it [the victim’s corpse] with a portion of it [the sacrificial cow].” In such a manner does Allah resuscitate the dead, and shows you His involvement so that you may use your disciplining thoughts (2:72–73).

Why did Allah (ﷻ) ask the Children of Israel to sacrifice a cow? The second portion of this story gives the answer as it demonstrates the powers of the Creator, the fact of resurrection, and the nature of life and death. The form of speech changes from storytelling to a direct address. Allah (ﷻ) divulged to the people of Moses (ﷺ) the wisdom of sacrificing a cow. It was because one Israeli had murdered another. But within the milieu of their clan partisanship, each Israeli group would have blamed the other for the murder in a way that eluded public responsibility. There was no witness in this homicide case. So Allah (ﷻ) wanted the truth to be pronounced by the victim himself and the sacrifice of the cow was a way to revive him. When his dead body was struck with a part of that sacrificial cow, the murdered man came back to life to point out his killer and to put an end to all the innuendo and rumors surrounding his death. In such a fashion the murder controversy was put to rest.

But someone may ask, why this method, why this way, when Allah (ﷻ) is capable of resurrecting the dead without this procedure? And what is the correlation between the sacrificial cow and the resurrected victim? In Israeli custom at the time, cows were sacrificial animals. How can a portion of a sacrificial animal cause a dead person to come back to life? The short answer is that it was a divinely chosen way to demonstrate Allah’s (ﷻ) almighty ability, an ability whose mechanism remains unknown to man in the issue of life and death. People can only see the effects but cannot penetrate the process. **“It is in such a way that Allah revives the dead.”** To bring this issue to the range of their senses Allah (ﷻ) had the Israelis go through these motions to realize that even if they are part

of a physical operation they are incapable of creative powers, materially or mentally, whereas Allah (ﷻ) does it with ease.

The distance between the nature of life and the nature of death is mind-boggling. But in divine terms it is trivial. How? We do not know because of our human limitations. We will never be able to unravel this mystery. The *how* and *what* of life and death dynamics shall remain a curiosity. Mortals will never ever be able to create life. Mortals though should dwell on and think about life as well as the implications and meanings of death “...so that He may show you His involvement [in your physical world] and so that you may think responsibly.”

Throughout this unfolding saga, during the excruciating pestering of the Israelis, Allah (ﷻ) did not disclose why this whole affair was communicated to Moses (ﷺ). This leaves a question that could probably be answered by a closer scrutiny of Israeli psychology: do the Israelis turn fussy and finicky when they suspect that something is brewing wherein they may be found culpable? Could it be that their pestering and badgering Moses (ﷺ) with all these questions was because they suspected that something damning was going to eventually result? Or else, what psychological dynamic was at work when they would approach Moses (ﷺ) with more entreaties about the cow?

Unless the Israelis were sadistic and took pleasure in harassing Moses (ﷺ), there must have been another variable at work that made them behave the way they did. The above is one explanation, as observing contemporary Israelis may further illuminate their speculative and mistrusting psychology. Another explanation is encapsulated in the next *āyah*, which rounds out the internal Israeli picture. After the unimaginable experience of seeing a dead man resurrected in front of their very eyes, it would be reasonable to assume that these Israelis would be moved, that they would stand in awe of Allah’s (ﷻ) power and be humbled. But the *āyāt* of the Qur’an point to another peculiar Israeli character trait as it responds to this awesome event, breath-taking adventure, and educational incident. The concluding *āyah* to this historical affair shows,

And yet, after all this, your hearts hardened and became like rocks, or even harder. For, behold, there are rocks from which streams gush forth; and, behold, there are some from which, when they are cleft, water issues; and, behold, there are some that fall down for awe of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do! (2:74).

These are not words of some anti-Semite; these are not statements from some ultra-extremist hate group; these are the words of Allah (ﷻ). And they make it unmistakably clear that these Israelis have hearts whose impenetrability exceeds the hardness and harshness of rocks. This is a timely metaphor. They saw with their own eyes how water burst out of rocks, twelve springs to be exact. They saw how a mountain was reduced to crumbled earth when God manifested Himself and Moses (ﷺ) fell unconscious. But still their hearts were distant, unmoved, and unaffected. These Israeli hearts are coarse, crude, and crass. Their hearts do not pulsate with any sympathy or sensitivity to God. They are as bereft and as barren as could possibly be imagined. And so Allah (ﷻ) daunts them saying, **“And Allah is not oblivious of what you do.”**

Thus ends this treacherous round with these Israeli falsifiers, prevaricators, impostors, frauds, nonconformists and traitors. In the broad Islamic view of human nature, this drawn-out affair between nitpicking Israeli schismatics on one side and Allah (ﷻ) and His Apostles (ﷺ) on the other serves the inheritors of the covenant (the Muslims) with a time proven lesson: accept Allah’s (ﷻ) words at face value and do not pick an argument with His commands. Whoever approaches Allah (ﷻ) as a protester will eventually end up making things harder than they were meant to be. There are two ways to think of what Allah (ﷻ) says. One way, the right way, is to analyze and to approach the extent of the wisdom in His divine words without depreciating the intent and purpose of those words. The other way, the Israeli way, is to question the words not for the sake of acquiescent understanding but for the sake of pooh-poohing the intent and purpose of the common sense and apparent meanings included in the divine statements. Obviously, Muslims are

instructed to think of the heavenly words but they are not counseled to have their thinking lead them to question the discretion and foresight of the revealed guidance. It is to this end that Allah (ﷻ) says,

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about matters which, if they were to be made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship; for if you should ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they might [indeed] be made manifest to you [as laws]. Allah has absolved [you from any obligation] in this respect: for Allah is much forgiving, forbearing. People before your time have indeed asked such questions, and in result thereof have come to deny the truth (5:101–102).

There is a hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) was known to have said,

Detested are those [statements of] rumors and propaganda, also detested is the squandering of money, and a horde [overkill] of questions.⁶²

In the above *āyāt*, there are ten favors Allah (ﷻ) bestowed upon Banū Isrā'īl. These ten favors are not enumerated here with a purpose to somehow suggest that Allah's (ﷻ) bounties are bounded. Indeed instances of Allah's (ﷻ) generosity to the Children of Israel were countless; these particular favors are merely listed as the significant ones which came to Banū Isrā'īl.

1. Allah (ﷻ) rescued them from the official Egyptian laws and policies enacted by Pharaoh and his affiliates, which promulgated the elimination of all Israeli males but spared the Israeli females.
2. Allah (ﷻ) parted the sea so that the Israeli “fugitives” could escape the Egyptian “law enforcement” authorities. The Israelis had their exodus and the Egyptian legions met with extinction.
3. Allah (ﷻ) forgave them for deifying a golden calf in the hope

- that they would appreciate such amnesty and never violate the Oneness of God.
4. Allah (ﷻ) bestowed His Torah upon them as a clear criterion between what is right and what is wrong; what is moral and what is immoral; and what is legal and what is illegal.
 5. Allah (ﷻ) atoned for them with the imposition of a severe penalty so that they would be saved the harsh other-worldly punishment; and this was because they associated others with Allah (ﷻ).
 6. Allah (ﷻ) resurrected them from a mass death experience to become once again a viable community with the potential of living up to the responsibilities and duties of the covenant.
 7. Allah (ﷻ) favored them by providing shade in the midst of a scorching desert between Egypt and Syria.
 8. Allah (ﷻ) offered these nomadic Israelis, coming out of slavery and a pathetically nfortunate life, the *manna* and quails in the middle of nowhere. Theirs became a land of milk and honey.
 9. Allah (ﷻ) designated for His covenant-bearers (as long as they were His true covenant-bearers) the two cities of al-Quds (Jerusalem) and Jericho (Ariḥā), with either of the two being a very selective and sensitive area as long as they observed their heavenly mandated obligations.
 10. Finally, Allah (ﷻ) responded to these roaming Israelis when they were dying of thirst, by having Moses (ﷺ) strike the rock out of which twelve springs erupted with flowing water.

Israel's Conspiratorial Nature

In the previous *āyāt* the theme clustered around Allah (ﷻ) reminding Banū Isrā'il of His blessings and how they showed relentless and rigid disaffection for all those numerous blessings. The historical facts that this Qur'anic scripture brings to life are strong and compelling. The conspiracy of silence and indifference towards the Qur'an by the media and the publicity pirates is simultaneously gross and obfuscating. But is not so dense as to prevent anyone who

understands the meanings of the Qur'an from immediately seeing through the newspeak of mainstream periodicals, publications, and the press when it comes to the subject of "Israel." Common to all the exposures of the Israelis in the Qur'an is one fact that stares Muslims in the eyes: the boorish, ill-bred, and sometimes vulgar character of these opportunists. To say they are stonehearted is enough to underscore their nature.

In this next extended Qur'anic discourse, it is the Muslims who are directly addressed about the nature of these Israeli psychological thugs. Muslims, take notice. This narrative, which begins with *āyah* 75 and ends with *āyah* 103, is telling you the facts and revealing the truth about these Israeli malcontents and how they collaborate and conspire. Allah (ﷻ) cautions you against their venomous and vengeful attitude in light of their vindictive history.

After the divine authority explains the treacherous Israeli human conduct, no Muslim should be fooled by any Israeli pretensions to justice, peace, and equality, or any other fancy media label applied to their programs, policies and politics. This prolonged discourse (*āyāt* 75–103) is proof that those Muslims who would challenge maximalist Israel need extensive information to open their eyes so that they can confidently part with their naiveté when it comes to the Israelis and Yahūd.

Had this been a simple affair then a few *āyāt* would have sufficed; but it is not simple. It will never be simple because the Israelis and Yahūd are clever and experienced at masking their true intent and precise purpose. Many Yahūdī methods have to be brought to light from their darkest closets to make it perfectly clear that these Yahūd as a community have no good intentions whatsoever vis-à-vis the Islamic social and state order.

As the Muslims are watching the divulgence of the visceral Israeli nature, the Qur'anic *āyāt* alternate from directly addressing the Muslims to candidly addressing the Israelis. Muslims become privy to the facts of the covenant and how the Israelis betrayed and violated it. The Israeli experiences of deviation and treachery as well as their hostility towards the Prophets (ﷺ) are made public. Even the Israeli penchant for killing Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ), because these men

of God did not concur with their proclivities and desires, is put on display by this divine Book. Israelis are known for circumventing the law of God, arguing around the facts and the truth, and twisting the meanings of divine revelation to suit their own interest.

The noble Qur'an samples their quarrels with the emerging Islamic society and debunks their false assertions and allegations. The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) is instructed to undress their claims and refute their arguments. He is told to unmask their intimations by addressing these aggressive Yahūdī tactics with the evident and explicit truth. They claim that the fire will touch them only for a few days because they are so special to God. So Allah (ﷻ) briefed His Prophet (ﷺ) to refute their assertion, **“Say, ‘Have you [the Israelis] secured Allah’s pact on this matter... or do you attribute statements to Allah which you have no knowledge of?’” (2:80).**

When these Israelis were called to yield to Allah’s (ﷻ) will and power, this is what they would say, **“‘We are committed to that which was bestowed on us’ and [then] they would deny all subsequent scriptures even though it endorses that which they have” (2:91).** Then Allah (ﷻ) instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) to counter their claim of being committed to the revelation they received,

Say [O Muhammad], “Then why did you [Israelis] kill Allah’s Prophets in times past if you are truly committed [to Allah]?” Moses came to you with all evidence of the truth but then you adopted a calf deity in an act of [betrayal and] injustice? And We accepted your solemn pledge and raised the mount above you: take what We have given you [the scripture] seriously and listen. They said, “We listen and disobey;” and their hearts were enraptured by the calf due to their denial of [Allah’s power]. Say [O Muhammad], “what an awful onus of [divine] commitment, but [then] are you truly committed [to Allah]?” (2:91–93).

Then these Israelis claimed that the coming life and world is exclusively theirs, and other people are not entitled to it. Allah

(ﷺ), therefore, counselled His Prophet (ﷺ) to challenge them to *al-mubāhalah* (confrontation through prayers). In this act both sides — the Muslims and Yahūd — would be summoned and both according to their own rituals and invocations would call on Allah (ﷻ) to eliminate whoever is lying.

Say [O Muhammad], “If the abode of the life to come is yours in exclusion to all other people then wish for death if you are honestly truthful.” But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead [to the hereafter from this world]; and Allah has full knowledge of evildoers (2:94–95).

And the Qur’an states that they will never ask for death in such a manner, and true enough, as the Qur’an said, they never did. They did not respond to this challenge because they know that they are lying and fabricating allegations.

The scriptural discourse carries on this confrontation with these nebulous Israelis; they are brought out from their deepest and darkest secrets. Once these Yahūd are hung out in public for everyone to see, then they are powerless. Out in the open, these Yahūd could not exercise power honorably and accountably, so they literally became the underworld where their influence is masked behind layers of presumptions and assumptions. The Qur’an with its penetrating words — and only the Qur’an — has the power to “catch them in their own act.” Enough history, enough cover-up of that history and enough collusion with that history exists to expose Israel forever. Muslims are still suffering from this incognito Israeli influence and its havoc-causing effects all over Africa and Asia. Yahūd have never stopped drawing Muslim blood. And despite all this information, it seems like today’s Muslims are still absentminded; they cannot figure out what the immutable Qur’an is saying about the Israeli monstrosity.

Alas, public brainwashing has gone so far as to render today’s run-of-the-mill Muslim incapable of understanding the Yahūdī threat to his own collective and personal existence. The only rea-

son why the Muslims in Madinah rooted out Yahūd was that they understood the Qur'anic description of Yahūd. The only reason today's 1.5 billion Muslims are being routed by Yahūd is that they do not understand the same Qur'anic indictments of Yahūd.

The Muslims in Madinah were of no known potential yet they rolled back all Yahūdī schemes. Today the Muslims are of limitless potential yet Yahūd have never felt more secure than they do today. They feel so secure that they can undisguisedly foment war eruptions in the Middle East. They are the ones who are itching for Persian Gulf wars and Arabian wars so that they may take advantage of chaos and instability, allowing them to impose their imperium throughout the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates.

The Muslim mind has a Yahūdī bug in it. That is why the average Muslim is willing to judge Yahūd by the night-and-day acclamations of Yahūd in the major media, but is unwilling to judge Yahūd by the eternal facts about them in the flawless Qur'an. The Qur'an is overflowing with all kinds of mental ammunition against the explosive Yahūdī propaganda. Yahūd's most powerful weapon is not the 400-plus nuclear arsenal they have in the Holy Land; it is the singular preponderant ignorance of Muslims about the nature and purpose of Israel. In this respect the Qur'an is the only antidote to Israeli weapons of mass destruction, not because it contains some superior scientific formula for a nuclear weapon. But rather, the Qur'an has the capacity to concentrate the minds of 1.5 billion Muslims and the rest of humanity's peace-loving and justice-seeking people on the threat and menace represented by Israel. The Qur'an makes things clear. These Yahūd are covenant impostors stealing other people's lands and building a disproportionate garrison state with a siege mentality in the midst of victimized non-Yahūd who are considered to have dispensable lives.

It is naive to say that Yahūd are simply getting away with this act. This assertion just scratches the surface of a larger and deeper infirmity. In the Muslim world, there are those who may be characterized as "Yahūd in disguise." These are the surface Muslims who will argue against this pertinent theme in the Qur'an and offer all sorts of "rights" and "civility" to the proven and tested enemies of

everything divine. Due to the Yahūdī virus in the Muslim public mind, the Yahūd need few paid agents. Who needs agents when Muslim populations are dominated by an army of court clergymen and culprits in the pulpit who will argue the fairness of Yahūd until the end of time, or at least until they are swept away by a willful Islamic determination to end all bogus Yahūdī expressions of justice.

The sad state of affairs is that Muslims have advocates of an “Israeli right” in universities, religious institutions, mosques, and grand mosques. When the so-called “imams” and “scholars” of these centers fail to accept the updating of Qur’anic meanings to address the endless stream of problems flowing through all walks of Muslim life nowadays, they are obviously extending the Israelis a lifeline. The only way to deconstruct Israel is to construct Islam. The only course to defeating Zionism is to champion Islam. And the only way to question the cause of Israel is to answer the call of Islam. Israel’s best kept secret is the depoliticization and demilitarization of the Muslims. Her frontline of defense is the sterile *masjid* and the brain-dead Muslims who go there. Her most protective shield is the coma-inducing *khuṭbah* that is as detached from the life-and-death issues facing Muslims as any devil would want it to be.

Allah (ﷻ) says in the first portion of His address to those Muslims who have confidence that Allah’s (ﷻ) words trump any misguided notions of societal political correctness,

- Can you, then, hope that they will commit themselves to what you are heralding — seeing that a good many of them were wont to listen to the word of Allah and then, after having understood it, to pervert it knowingly?
- For, when they meet those who have committed [to Allah], they say, “We are committed to Allah as you are,” but when they find themselves alone with one another, they say, “Do you inform them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they might use it in argument against you, quoting the words of your Sustainer? Will you not, then, use your reason?”
- Do they not know, then, that Allah is aware of all that they would conceal as well as all that they bring into the open?

أَفَنظَمُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَقَدْ كَانَفَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَةً
 مِنْ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَحْرِفُونَ بِهَا، مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِذَا
 لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا
 أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ، عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا
 تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ
 ﴿٧٧﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا ءَامَانِي وَإِنَّهُمْ إِلَّا
 يُظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ
 هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيُشْتَرَوْا بِهِ، ثُمَّ قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا
 كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا
 النَّارُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَا مَعْدُودَةٌ قُلْ أَتُحَدِّثُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ
 يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ، أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلَى
 مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ، خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
 النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
 أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا
 مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي

الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا
 الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ
 وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ
 وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾
 ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ
 مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِلْثَامِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسْرَىٰ
 فَتَدْوِهِمْ وَهُوَ مُحْرَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفْتَوْمُنُونِ بِبَعْضِ
 الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ
 مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ
 الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا
 الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَخْفُفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾
 وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا
 عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ
 بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنفُسُكُمْ أَسْتَكْبِرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

- And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine writ, [following] only wishful beliefs, and depending on nothing but conjecture.
- Woe to those who write scripture of their own dictate and then say, “This comes from Allah.” They do this for a trifling price. Woe, then, unto them for what their hands have written, and woe unto them for all that they may have gained!
- And they say, “The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days.” Say [unto the Israelis], “Have you secured Allah’s pact on this matter — for Allah never disavows his pact — or do you attribute statements to Allah which you have no knowledge of?”
- Definitely. Those who earn evil and are engulfed by their sinfulness, they are destined for the fire, therein to abide;
- Whereas those who are committed to Allah [’s power] and what are righteous deeds, they are destined for paradise, therein to abide.
- And lo! We accepted this solemn pledge from [you,] the Children of Israel: You shall comply with none but God; and you shall do good unto your parents and kinsfolk, and the orphans, and the poor; and you shall speak unto all people in a kindly way; and you shall bear the standard of an [human] affiliation [with Allah]; and you shall [systematically] dedicate your wealth [by giving it to those in need]. And yet, save for a few of you, you turned away — for you are obstinate folk.
- And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed one another’s blood, and would not drive one another from your homelands, whereupon you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now].
- And yet, it is you who slay one another and drive some of your own from their homelands aiding one another against them in sin and hatred; but if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; although your very [act of] driving them away has been made unlawful to you. Do you, then, commit yourselves to some parts of the divine writ and deny the

truth of the other parts? What, then, could be the reward of those among you who do such things but ignominy in the life of this world and, on the Day of Resurrection, assignment to most grievous suffering? For Allah is not unmindful of what you do.

- All who buy the life of this world at the price of the life to come, their suffering shall not be lightened, nor shall they be promoted.
- For indeed, We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ and caused apostle after apostle to follow him; and We vouchsafed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, all evidence of the truth, and strengthened him with holy inspiration. [Yet] is it not so that every time an apostle came unto you with something that was not to your liking, you glorified in your arrogance, and to some of them you gave the lie while others you would slay? (al-Baqarah:75–87).

Allah (ﷻ) has already alluded to Israeli hearts being dry, dull, dumb and difficult. Materialism had become so much a part of their lives that their hearts were equivalent or even worse than rocks. Like rocks, the Israelis are not gentle; they are neither responsive nor receptive. There is a strong sense of discouragement as far as such hearts are concerned. There would be no heavenly message that could penetrate these stony humans. In spite of this accurate Qur'anic characterization of the Israelis' receptivity or lack thereof, there are committed Muslims who then, and now, try to convince these Yahūdīs of the validity and authenticity of this final Scripture.

Yes, there are Muslims who act as if these *āyāt* do not exist and burn with a desire to guide these rock-hearted creatures. The Qur'anic question that follows implies the futility of such attempts with these stone-like Israelis. As if to suggest there is no use, Allah (ﷻ) says

Do you aspire to have them committed [to your divine mission], when there was a class of them who would listen to Allah's scriptural words and then distort them

after having understood their meanings, and while they were aware of what they were doing? (2:75).

No Muslim should entertain any notion of guiding these types or showing them any light, much less having them committed to divine standards. These Israelis showed no respect for Allah's (ﷻ) power. With all the miracles that were produced for their sensuous nature they still could not tame their senses and adhere to the Highest Authority. They showed no sign of behaving courteously and properly with the God of Abraham, the God of Israel, and the God of the universe. How dare they contort, confuse, and counterfeit God's holy words and His sacred text? They, or for that matter any other humans, can only do that if they have decided that Allah (ﷻ) is not a power to be reckoned with. Hence, the thinking goes that if they can do such things and get away with it, while making a profit and serving their own interests, then why not? Such people have not the slightest inkling of *taqwá*. Why then do Muslims even bother to try and soften such cemented attitudes?

The contingent of Yahūd designated in the *āyah* above is the educated stratum of their society, those who would be most familiar with God's heavenly words. These are the rabbis and the sages; the ones who listened to and were familiar with the revealed words to Moses (ﷺ) in the Torah. These were the ones who would misquote verses, quote verses out of context or extrapolate meanings that were alien to the original intent.

They did this not because they were ignorant of the true and intended meaning, but because they premeditated the distortion. What would have them do such a terrible thing? Could it be their personal, racial or worldly interest as opposed to the universal standard that is embedded in God's Book? Such people who were deliberately willing to falsify or adulterate the Book of Moses (ﷺ) are also willing to falsify and bastardize the Book of Muhammad (ﷺ) if they can manage it!⁶³ If Israeli rabbis and sages are willing and capable of throwing Moses (ﷺ) and the Torah to the wind, they would more easily be willing to throw Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur'an onto the ash heap of bygone civilizations, *astaghfir-allāh*.

At this point it would be interesting to know how many Yahūd have become Muslims since the Qur'an was revealed. There are not any statistics that could help us out with a further elaboration on the meanings of this *āyah*. But, as far as the existing Islamic historical record is concerned, there are no citations of mass numbers of Jews becoming Muslim in the committed sense of the word. It is also interesting to note that, through this author's lifetime experience in the West, rabbis have generally been circumspect about debating Muslim scholars in public, even though there is what is called "freedom of expression." If Muslims supposedly have nothing to stand on when it comes to scriptural history, why is it that as much as we try, the rabbis are unresponsive to a public forum on these matters of scripture and revelation? And if, from time to time, the inter-faith groups find a Muslim who will share a platform with them, it is usually a Muslim who affirms their agenda or does not have the integrity to reference his mind and speech in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The Qur'an delivers an incontrovertible presentation of facts,

And if they were to encounter the committed [Muslims] they would say, "We are also committed to [Allah]." But when they are in their confidential meetings they say [to themselves], "Do you divulge to them [the Muslims] what Allah has disclosed to you, do you want them to use your own words against you in the presence of your Sustainer? Are you not intellectually responsible?" (2:76).

How can Muslims even think that these types will see the light one day? In addition to their spoiled psychology, their tarnishing of the truth, their wayward words, they have further dishonored themselves with duplicity, hypocrisy, deceit, and subterfuge. Some of these old-hand Yahūd would face a Muslim and say, "We are committed to God and Muhammad's message."⁶⁴ They knew from the prophecies of the Torah that Muhammad (ﷺ) is God's prophet. They were anticipating his advent and even asked God to have this new prophet champion their cause to defeat their adversaries.

In a following *āyah* Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And before, they [Yahūd] would break the news [of Muhammad’s advent] to the deniers of revelation... ” (2:89)**. But once these Yahūd were in their closed meetings they would blame themselves for having leaked this Torahic information to the Muslims as it would infer validity on the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ); and they would indirectly be confessing to the authenticity of the Muhammadi task. And so some Yahūd would say to others of their kind, **“Do you speak to them [the Muslims] of information revealed to you by Allah so that they [the Muslims] are able to rebuff you in the presence of your Lord?”**

At this point, their sensual nature catches up with them. They say this in the privacy of their secret meetings without realizing that Allah (ﷻ) listens to all their utterances, and they only feign submission to the authority of God if the Muslims were to use their words against them. Whether or not the Muslims articulate scripture does not matter; what matters is Yahūdi knowledge of it clandestinely and their ignorance of it publicly. Do they think that if they were to conceal this known fact from the public eye then Allah (ﷻ) will not take them to task for it? How absurd can they get? To complicate their stupidity they tell each other, **“Can you not reason?”** They mock all sorts of reasons and reasoning and then they pose this silly question to themselves. And they still claim to be smart!

Before going on to expose more of their nonsense, Allah (ﷻ) says, **“Do they not know that Allah knows what they say privately and what they say publicly?” (2:77)**. This is what happens to people who are cut off from Allah (ﷻ). They lose sight of the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is with them wherever they are and at every moment of the day. Their secret meetings are attended by Allah (ﷻ); their classified information is known to Allah (ﷻ) and their inner-most plans are witnessed by Allah (ﷻ). But when people become rich and powerful, they lose sight of this fact. Even though the Israelis had no ultimate authority in Madinah, they had considerable influence and clout in the Madinan society prior to Islam. And they thought that their behind-the-scenes maneuvers, which were so effective in Yathrib, would also be effective in Madinah.

But they were in for the shock of their lives. Madinah was not Yathrib, the Arabs were not Arabians, and the Muslims were not the Aws and Khazraj whom they were used to manipulating. Before Allah (ﷻ), the Prophet (ﷺ), the Qur'an, and Islam, Yahūd could get away with surreptitious and covert operations. That is because the simple and nomadic Arabians were not bonded to a Higher Authority, Allah Almighty (ﷻ). In such a situation, the Yahūd were adept at exploiting these Arabians, who in the conscious absence of Allah (ﷻ) were vulnerable.

History has turned full cycle now as today's Arabians are also absent-minded of Allah (ﷻ) in their decisions and positions. And the Israelis are back to their old tricks: they manipulate one faction of Arabians against another. Is it any wonder that there are potential feuds, skirmishes, and wars brewing throughout Arabian lands?

Muslims need not reinvent the wheel. With 20/20 hindsight they have an abundance of experience with racist Israelis and jingoistic Yahūd. In the purity of Muslim hearts and in a genuine overture to them over 1,400 years ago in Madinah, the Muslims thought that the Jews would be the first to endorse the final Scripture because they were monotheists, they experienced revelations before, and they believed in the Final Day. Our pioneering ancestors anticipated a mass conversion of Jews into Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. Islam even annulled much of the previous restrictions incurred by the Israeli experience with revelation. Islam was a fresh start for every Jew who wished to renew and rededicate his covenant with Allah (ﷻ),

Those who shall follow the [last] Apostle, the unschooled Prophet whom they shall find described in the Torah that is with them, and [later on] in the Gospel, [the Prophet] who will enforce morality with power and will decommission immorality, and make lawful to them the good things of life and forbid them the bad things, and lift from them [the Israelis] their burdens and the shackles that were upon them [afore-time]; those of them who shall make a secure commitment to him, and honor him, and succor him, and

follow the light that has been bestowed from on high through him — it is they who shall attain to a happy state (7:157).

Our pioneers in Madinah, the first Muslim generation, may have been overzealous or not very well-informed about these chauvinist and racist Israelis who converted a universalist covenant into a bigoted one, a covenant owned and patented by the Israeli extremists. It is even reported that in the errant hope of winning the hearts and minds of Yahūd, the committed Muslims in Madinah would be so accommodating of Yahūd as to cozy up to them, divulging some of the Muslims' personal and innermost concerns. These simpleton Muslims even considered Yahūd to be their natural allies.

This Muslim camaraderie with Yahūd, which made the latter privy to internal Islamic affairs, caused serious damage and consequences that Allah (ﷻ) had to address from above seven heavens,

O You who are divinely committed! Do not surround yourselves with minions who spare no effort to corrupt you; they should love to see you in distress. Vehement hatred has already come into the open from out of their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is yet worse... (3:118).

Allah (ﷻ), the Glorious and the Wise, was not sending down this information about the Israelis to put Muslims to sleep. These Qur'anic narratives about the Children of Israel are not lullabies. Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) explain that there were 70 men who went with Moses (ﷺ) to watch and observe how he receives revelation and be privy to scriptural information from heaven to earth.⁶⁵ They were the cream of the Israeli crop. After experiencing the sensual trauma in trying to absorb the experience through their physical interpretation of things, in trying to make sense of the light descending upon Moses (ﷺ), they returned to their people twisting and contorting the words of revelation.

If the top Israeli echelon had the gall to deform the divine dispensation, then it would be entirely appropriate to expect the lesser other Israelis, who but follow the lead, to do so as well. And with the lapse of thousands of years since that event, there has not been any noticeable Israeli public consensus to denounce these acts against God. So Muslims should conclude that this defiance of God has not only become an Israeli trait, but also an Israeli instinct.

Another important consideration that should be drilled into the current Muslim mind is that these Israelis are beyond reproach. Can anyone imagine the following? Throughout their entire scriptural history they were flooded with all types of physical and tangible miracles; yet after all that, they turned their back on God, their prophet, and the scripture he brought. When the Qur'an came and turned a new page in which miracles were no longer physical as much as they were mental, not tactical as much as they were strategic, not sensual as much as they were endurance and tenacity miracles, the materialistic Israeli believers would have no concern whatsoever with these kinds of miracles. The Qur'an is mental, thoughtful, rational, and intellectual and that is the towering miracle of the Qur'an. But the Israelis want miracles which by definition are mentally, thoughtfully, rationally, and intellectually incomputable and incompatible. **“And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine Writ, [following] only wishful beliefs, and depending on nothing but conjecture” (2:78).**

Here the words of Qur'anic wisdom unveil the internal Israeli condition. These Israelis are not a monolith, as some short-sighted Muslims and gentiles assume. In one way of looking at them, there are two obvious segments. The first is an ignorant and illiterate segment, not well-versed on the matters and meanings of their own scripture. All they know amounts to little more than speculations and assumptions, and a sense of being exempted from God's punishment and retribution. Are they not “God's chosen people?” All mistakes and sins have to be annulled because they are His chosen race.

The other more influential segment in this Israeli hierarchy is the one that capitalizes on this illiteracy and ignorance. These are

the ones who plagiarize God's script and give their own twisted and unfounded meanings to God's words. They may also conceal some of God's words and verses and substitute other self-serving ones. They may even pronounce their own words and thoughts and then attribute them to God.

Why would they do this? Unequivocally, Allah (ﷻ) lets us know that they aim for profit and worldly gains, for positions and status,

And of them [the Israelis] there are illiterates who are ignorant of scripture except for the wishful and impressionistic thoughts [it gives them]. Woe to those who write scripture of their own dictate and then say, "This comes from Allah." They do this for a trifling price. Woe to them for what their hands write and woe to them in what they receive [for it]" (2:78–79).

How do you expect these scriptural con artists and their likes to respond favorably to a Qur'anic message that is justice-seeking and justice-centered? They cannot walk the straight path of *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* because they have the zig-zag attitude of working around Allah's (ﷻ) words and if that is not possible, of bulldozing Allah's (ﷻ) word altogether. No one should entertain a scintilla of hope for guiding these types of people. These types are doomed. Period. They are damned for counterfeiting God's scripture and they are damned for getting paid for counterfeiting God's scripture.

In the religious mind salvation has a special meaning. All religious peoples look towards a final escape out of the sins and distractions of the harsh and seductive world. In this sequence of *āyāt* salvation has an eccentric definition imparted to it by the exaggerated claims of the Children of Israel who presented the concept in the words,

And they say, "The fire [of Hell] will not affect us except for a few days." Say [unto the Israelis], "Have you secured Allah's pact on this matter — for Allah never

disavows his pact — or do you attribute statements to Allah which you have no knowledge of?” (2:80).

The answer to the question in the preceding *āyah* follows. It is an answer that states a sweeping, widespread, and universal principle that has been at the core of heaven’s message to earth. This principle roars in the face of all racists and exclusivists throughout the world. It says that the divine payback comes from the nature of the deed and in proportion to it,

Definitely. Those who earn evil and are engulfed by their sinfulness, they are destined for the fire, therein to abide; whereas those who are committed to Allah [’s power] and what are righteous deeds, they are destined for paradise, therein to abide (2:81–82).

The Israeli explanation of salvation is a definite and dangerous detour from the Godly concept of justice for all peoples. There is no sense in claiming that God has a “soft spot” for the Children of Israel. Are other humans less likable in the sight of God compared to the Israeli humans? Or is there an extra ingredient of humanity in the Israelis that would qualify them for an elitist treatment from God? Of course none of this is true. The Israelis are as human as all the rest of God’s children; and God is equally a source of salvation for all His children, so to speak. So for man, what is it that imparts a sense of security and a hope for ultimate salvation?

The answer is in the *āyah*, **“Yea! Whoever gains an infraction [of deed] and is encompassed by his [systemic] mistake...”** This is the correct reference of the whole affair of salvation. Notice the wording of this idea in the Qur’an. Foul acts (the infraction of deeds) become in their beholders’ eyes something to gain. At first the untoward act may have been disliked by its perpetrator but then after being systematically involved in this habit of foul acts he or she begins to think that there is profit involved, so the foul act cannot be bad after all.

A foul act or deed cannot be a loss when there are gains and profits involved. It is within God’s grace and love to forgive random

and isolated acts of infraction or indignity, but it would be a violation of God's justice to forgive the habitual or systemic acts of infraction or indignity that have become the passageway of all sinners to doom and gloom in the approaching world of absolute justice.

The Qur'anic words, **"And are encompassed [or corralled] by their [routine] misdeeds..."** are an expression of how human offensive acts take on a momentum of their own. The individual who initiated these organized and methodical acts of malfeasance and dereliction then winds up becoming a victim of his systematic approach to making profits out of immoral acts. In a sense, Allah (ﷻ) is delineating the way sin becomes an institutionalized part of everyday life. The humans who are responsible for gradually overturning civil order will not be able to evade the ultimate judgment on the forthcoming Day of Accountability.

An aberrational slip-up will not necessarily land one in the hellfire, even if the lapse happens several times. Allah's (ﷻ) mercy and forgiveness, His care for the dignity of His human servant, and His love for His finest creation, will shield man from the embarrassment and long-term consequences associated with his sin as long as man progressively shields himself from the corrective justice of Allah's power (*taqwá*). Only when a person enters into a phase where his anomalous lapses fail to prick his conscience, where remorse, contrition and repentance (*tawbah*) begin to become unnecessary for him, and where he finds himself developing rationalizations for rogue behaviors, then he needs to become concerned about the impending confrontation with Allah's (ﷻ) power.

In one sense, man learns when he errs; this means that *tawbah* and *taqwá* are tightly connected: there is no *taqwá* without *tawbah*. And the process of acquiring *taqwá* is significantly weakened unless man occasionally falls. Allah (ﷻ) says, **"Verily, those who have *taqwá*, when any dark suggestion from the company of Shayṭan touches them, they [immediately] reflect [upon Allah's power] — whereupon, lo! they gain insight and foresight" (7:201).**

The key is that lapses into sin should be followed by *tawbah* and not rationalizations of behaviors proscribed by Allah (ﷻ). Rationalizations do not simply find fertile ground in the conscience

of individuals. They are socially reinforced by the developmental evolution of a society, the socialization one receives in that society, how he thinks about his place in the society, the psychological (not the legal and moral) inputs he receives about what is generally permissible and what is not, the foundational principles upon which the society is erected, and the parallel institutions that promote a certain way of living. Thus a rationalization of a behavior — any behavior, good or bad — is based on a social context and socializing force that are part of the environment an individual lives in. If the society runs on Qur'anic principles of social justice, then the vast majority of rationalizations (*dhikr* or reflection) will lead to prosperity for all of humanity; however if the society is founded upon principles of self-interest for special interests, then the vast majority of rationalizations (*fusūq* or justification) will lead the bulk of humanity to destruction and ruin.

Sins punishable by eternal damnation do not lie in the realm of individual violators. Perpetual misdeeds are necessarily aggregated into an institutional force that cannot exist without sucking in large groups of indifferent people who inadvertently provide administrative support, field work, research, promotion, lobbying and management skills. Such corrupting institutions exist for one reason and one reason only: a large profit is to be made. But a profit built on a brazenly immoral footing is impossible, at least initially; thus justifications to assuage the God-given conscience of right-thinking people must be provided. It is these types of “rationalizing” institutions which invite a damning and damnable sin upon society. This is the type of collective sin that merits eternal punishment.

This is exactly the Israeli-Yahūdī disposition. They can find a justification for any and every act under the sun. There is no moral recrimination against any act or policy which will generate huge profits. Thus pornography is justified as a form of free speech; state run gambling outfits are justified because they bring in revenues for much-needed social programs; mass murder is justified under the aegis of eradicating terrorism; occupation, extermination and expulsion is justified as a right of the “chosen;” continued degradation of the environment is justified as a necessary evil of industrial-

ization; and massive defense spending enabled by increasing rates of taxation is justified because national security is threatened.

These Yahūd are still awaiting their Messiah, who when he arrives, will give them victory over their enemies. Some years ago before the end of the second Gregorian millennium, some Christian Dispensationalists were heard to say that prophecy indicates this is the right time for Jesus (ﷺ) to come back (the second coming of Christ) and that when he comes, the faithful will be raptured. Does this expectation somehow reverse the policies that extinguished the lives of hundreds of millions of people? Does this reverse the confiscatory economic programs and predatory lending practices that have heaped a generational debt on all the world's peoples? Does this reverse the irresponsible consumption and distribution of resources that has brought two-thirds of the world's population to the brink of insolvency, hunger and starvation? Does this reverse the nation-building model that has brought the world to the brink of perpetual war? But this is how they think. In spite of their degenerate moral character and the effects of policies that are rooted in rejecting Allah's (ﷻ) authority, they feel they will be saved.

But these are the Israelis. Their justificatory attitude is second nature to their argumentative aptitude. The legal profession has become a beehive for crass justifiers and argument aficionados. Yahūdī rationalizations have vindicated pimps, rapists, drug traffickers, arms dealers, extortionists, murderers, defrauders, and organized crime bosses. Their legal "counsel" has allowed the high, the mighty, the influential, the wealthy, the presidents and the princes to escape accountability by skating through loopholes. What loopholes were made available for the blind Sheikh 'Umar 'Abd al-Raḥmān?⁶⁶ What justifications were given to keep him out of an American jail? This Israeli cabal owns the legal profession. Muslims take notice that they have schooled themselves in this area for thousands of years. Anyone who can have the temerity to argue with Allah (ﷻ) and kill His Prophets (ﷺ), will have no problem in convincing human beings to go on the wrong course.

Despite all this deception and trickery, they regard heaven to be their exclusive property. How warped can you be?! The only one

equipped to handle them is Allah (ﷻ). That is why He has revealed to Muslims, in a detailed fashion, the very depths of their immoral, racist, elitist, exclusivist, and separatist nature.

This whole outline features humans and their deeds. There is no special treatment for any human because of his class, rank, family, wealth status, race, ethnicity, color, gender or place of geographic origin. Every person is identified and defined by what he does. When a human (Israeli or non-Israeli, so-called Christians and so-called Muslims) is a component of organized sin regardless of all the worldly justifications and legalities he may hide behind, and when he integrates into the proliferation of crime and corruption, he will stand to account for his life's efforts. No mechanical word or sentence will exclude him from Allah's (ﷻ) justice, “...they are cronies of the fire, where they will dwell indefinitely.”

Following this statement is its corollary, “whereas those who are bound to Allah [’s power] and do right deeds, they are destined for Heaven, where they will dwell indefinitely.” Once again it needs emphasizing that there is no such thing as a spiritual belief in Islam or a creed that stands on its own without it generating good deeds and righteous action. It is for this reason that the noun *īmān* or the verb *āmanū* in the Qur’an are almost always followed by *‘amilū al-ṣāliḥāt*, which means with faith there comes, by necessity, virtuous effort and moral labor.

Truth-seeking Muslims need to take a closer look at this issue because they often stumble over loaded words that convey explosive counter-meanings. Two of these words are *faith* and *belief*, which are erroneously chosen by most translators to represent the Qur’anic word *īmān*. Before the word *belief* can be distinguished from *īmān*, its meanings in the English secular mind must be examined.

Belief, certainty, conviction refer to acceptance of, or confidence in, an alleged fact or body of facts as true or right without positive knowledge or proof. *Belief* is such acceptance in general, for instance a “belief in astrology.” *Certainty* indicates unquestioning belief and positiveness in one’s own mind that something is true; “I know this for a certainty” is a common expression. *Conviction* is settled, profound, or earnest belief that something is

right, for example “a conviction that a decision is just.” Some other commonly encountered examples include “statements unworthy of belief;” confidence, “I believe in my quarterback;” trust, “a child’s belief in his parents;” faith; a religious tenet or tenets, “the Christian belief.” Therefore, it may be said that *belief* is a mental or psychological state that accepts a certain claim, proposition, premise or position to be true. All these and associated themes have to be rejected forthwith as a definition for *īmān*. In all these meanings of *belief*, there is no integrated human action that contributes to solidifying the relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Hence, the word *belief* can never convey the meaning of *īmān*.

In the Islamic terminology, belief breeds certainty which in turn cultivates conviction. But this is all achieved through the kind of human endeavor, exertion, energy, and effort that is the product of a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice. In this sense, all the suffering and adversities that accompany the human condition are incentives for the solidification of the covenant relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

When the convergence of the psychological and physical (belief and deed) components in man’s persona becomes indistinguishable, it results in positive and honorable conduct that brings the ultimate reward of salvation. In other words, for conviction to be *conviction*, it must be validated by associated behaviors. The test of time has singled out Allah’s (ﷻ) final Scripture and *sunnah* as the only heavenly program that has managed to keep these ingredients together. All other religions of divine origin have come apart through the years on this particular theme. That is why Yahūd, on the one hand, hide behind the “chosen race mentality” and Christians, on the other hand, claim they are automatically saved if they “believe” in Jesus Christ (ﷺ) as “Lord” and “Saviour.”

And following this escapist route out of the covenant relationship with Allah (ﷻ), there are some Muslims who claim that by verbalizing the two *shahādahs* (testimonies) they, too, at the end of the day, are saved. All these Covenant deserters have reneged on the work ethic of *īmān*.

The Muslims are the last ones on planet Earth who still have a sense of this covenant relationship with Allah (ﷻ). They are the ones who in defiance of the official and imposed separation of church and state have not, by and large, accepted the separation between *īmān* and admirable activity. The Muslims have to realize that they are void of *īmān* when they are vacant of meritorious deeds.

There unfortunately exists a remedial category of “Muslims.” They carefully craft a media image of piety replete with meticulous observation of ritual; however when the television cameras are turned off, they are the quintessential bad boys, corrupt characters, and malicious malcontents. They are the regional proxies who facilitate tyrannical operations of external *tāghūti* agendas, resulting in policies of hostility and degradation against Muslims of faith and destiny. These types of photo-opportunity Muslims have not one iota of *īmān*. They can anticipate no positive reward in the life to come, and they shall not be compensated with God’s heaven even if all the world’s media props them up with platitudes of redemption and salvation.

What is applicable to Yahūd is also applicable to “Muslims” who are camouflaged by their family names, their traditional habits, and their empty words. Yahūd, Christians, and Muslims are all held to this heavenly standard and earthly principle, **“And those who are devoted to Allah [’s power] and [necessarily] follow that up with chaste conduct, they are affiliates of paradise where they will last forever” (2:82).**

The Qur’anic elocution goes on to ingrain the facts about Yahūd and their refractory, balky, intractable, and insubordinate persona. Yahūd are forced to come to terms with the facts of their own history while the Muslims are witnesses to this information from heaven,

And lo! We accepted this solemn pledge from [you,] the Children of Israel: You shall comply with none but God; and you shall do good unto your parents and kinsfolk, and the orphans, and the poor; and you shall speak unto all people in a kindly way; and you shall bear the stan-

dard of an [human] affiliation [with Allah]; and you shall [systematically] dedicate your wealth [by giving it to those in need]. And yet, save for a few of you, you turned away — for you are obstinate folk.

And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed one another's blood, and would not drive one another from your homelands, whereupon you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now]. And yet, it is you who slay one another and drive some of your own from their homelands aiding one another against them in sin and hatred; but if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; although your very [act of] driving them away has been made unlawful to you.

Do you, then, commit yourselves to some parts of the divine writ and deny the truth of the other parts? What, then, could be the reward of those among you who do such things but ignominy in the life of this world and, on the Day of Resurrection, assignment to most grievous suffering? For Allah is not unmindful of what you do. All who buy the life of this world at the price of the life to come, their suffering shall not be lightened, nor shall they be promoted (2:83–86).

In the course of reminding these Israelis of Allah's (ﷻ) providence, the solemn pledge in the *āyāt* above was also affirmed previously in the specter of the Mount,

And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising the Mount high above you, [and saying,] “Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and bear in mind all that is therein, so that you might remain conscious of Allah!” (2:63).

The first *āyah* in the present discourse reiterates the solemn pledge or covenant with the Children of Israel. Here the reader is

treated to some details of this pledge of allegiance to Allah (ﷻ). The Children of Israel were primarily instructed to take the matter very seriously and to be cognizant of it. The clarifying terms of the pledge included Allah's (ﷻ) permanent principles, henceforth rededicated by the final Scripture of Islam. The Israelis of today, not unlike their brethren of the past, would plead ignorance and express unfamiliarity with these principles! Allah's (ﷻ) covenant with them included the following:

- they should conform to no-one but Him, the One God, the Only God; this is the basis of all Allah's (ﷻ) messages to man;
- they should be courteous to parents, relatives, orphans, and the broken in spirit;
- they should speak gently to people even when they are trying to legalize morality and delegitimize immorality; and,
- they should standardize a popular affiliation with Allah (ﷻ) and an orderly circulation of money to reach those who are in need.

The above elements summarize the principles of Allah's (ﷻ) eternal message of human conformity to the divine Authority. Two facts are apparent in this discourse. First, Allah's (ﷻ) scriptures are one in essence. There is no serious difference between Judaic, Christian and Islamic holy scripts. The Islamic final word from heaven endorses this fact while it rededicates the principles of the older scriptures. Second, the *āyāt* testify to the Yahūdī intransigence in fulfilling these holy principles even after they agreed to live up to the responsibilities of the covenant. At this juncture, the form of speech shifts from a direct address to the Muhammadi covenant bearers to the Israeli covenant bearers. This peculiar readdress is especially resentful and indignant at the Israeli withdrawal from the obligations of the covenant, **“Then you abandoned [this covenant], except for a few of you, with no second thoughts about it!” (2:83).**

The discussion proceeds to concentrate on how Banū Isrā'il contradict themselves vis-à-vis their covenant with Allah (ﷻ). **“And We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed**

one another's blood, and would not displace each other from their homelands — and you acknowledged all this in affirmative fashion” (2:84).

But what happened after this affirmative testimonial of the covenant?

Then, here you are killing yourselves and expelling a portion of you out of their lands, aiding one another against them by breach and aggression! But if they come to you as captives you ransom them, although the very fact of rendering them refugees is unlawful. Are you abiding by part of the [Holy] Book and neglecting other parts? (2:84–85)

The historical facts cited here in the Qur'an were of relatively recent occurrence. The facts refer to events that occurred just before the two power factions in Yathrib, the Aws and Khazraj, had been reconciled by Islam. The two were bitter enemies, as bitter as Arabian belligerents could get. The Yahūd in Yathrib were distributed across three tribes, each one having its own bilateral agreement with either of the two Arabian factions. The Yahūdī Qaynuqā' and al-Naḍīr tribes were allies of the Arabian Khazraj tribe, while the Yahūdī Qurayẓah were allies of the Aws.

If war was to erupt between the Arabian antagonists, each Yahūdī tribe would side with its Arabian ally. In this arrangement a Yahūdī would actually define his enemy through the stipulation of his agreement with his Arabian ally (Aws or Khazraj). Accordingly, it was possible and feasible for a Yahūdī to kill another Yahūdī from the opposing side of this polarized alliance. But this, according to their solemn pledge with Allah (ﷻ), was supposed to be taboo.

These Yahūd would also be active in displacing other Yahūd who were on the losing side of this split-Arabian warfare. Yahūd would not only plunder the possessions of other Yahūd, but also take them as prisoners of war. And this also was prohibited according to their solemn pledge with Allah (ﷻ). And once the hostili-

ties were over, there would be an exchange of prisoners or their release on conditions, until finally all the Yahūd were free! At this point of freeing their prisoners of war, they would observe the law of the Torah by being keen on the liberation of all Yahūd from bondage. This Yahūdī contradiction of behavior has been flagged by the keen Qur'an as it disapprovingly asks them, **“Do you commit yourselves to some sections of the [Holy] Book and repudiate other sections?” (2:85)**

Such violations of their covenant with Allah (ﷻ) sets them up for worldly retribution and incrimination, with harsher penalties to follow in the approaching life. They are put on notice that Allah (ﷻ) is neither absent-minded nor is He about to amnesty such treason,

What, then, could be the payback for such of your acts, except infamy in this world, and when the Day of Resurrection comes they shall be returned to acute anguish; and Allah is not mindless of what you do (2:85).

Turning to the Muslims and all of humanity, the Qur'an now exposes these covenant traitors along with their true character, **“They are the ones who sold the coming life for this one. For that they shall not experience a decrease of torment, nor shall they be championed” (2:86)**. For all times to come, Allah (ﷻ) is telling all would-be readers of the Qur'an and covenant-seeking people everywhere what *actually* transpired between the early Muslims and Yahūd. This is not some historical account tainted by human bias; it is truthful insight into the nature and behavior of a habitually covenant-rejecting people. These Yahūd knew the revelation but would not discuss it with the early Muslims so as not to lose an argument; they knew the Prophet (ﷺ) was the genuine article; they would tell the Muslims they were committed to Allah's guidance, but behind the scenes they were plotting against the noble Messenger (ﷺ); they knew they were breaking the covenant by killing each other and then ransoming captives; they knew all of this but still behaved as if Allah (ﷻ) did not exist, as if there

would be no reckoning. For thousands of years, they knew that with this kind of rejection and unyielding opposition to Allah (ﷻ) and His messengers (ﷺ), they would have ignominy in the worldly life and unceasing punishment in the eternal life.

So, especially when the Qur'anic *āyah* could not be clearer, **“...they shall not experience a decrease of suffering, nor shall they be supported,”** how did they reach the understanding that the fire will only scorch them for a few days? Its simple: they made it up. Just as they had invented other pieces of “guidance” in times past and then added it to Allah's (ﷻ) revealed word, they fabricated this so that they could aggrandize themselves against all other “scripture-less” people in the world.

The reason why they bartered away the eternity of bliss in the coming life for the advantage of this world was their preference for discharging contract terms with worldly power factions. As already noted, contract terms related to internecine killing and the capturing of prisoners were themselves violations of the covenant with Allah (ﷻ) and the principles of the holy writ. The Yahūdī bifurcation into apparently opposing factions siding with two different allies, who are themselves at war, is a typical Israeli plan: they want to be on the winning side regardless of who wins, they do not want to put all their eggs in one basket. They did this with the Aws and Khazraj in Yathrib then. They did it before that with the Romans and Jesus (ﷺ), they did it in the bloody civil wars that erupted in the Islamic domain after the *khilāfah* administration of Imam 'Alī, and they did it during the emergence of the nation-states in the Islamic hemisphere.

They are doing it today almost all over the world where they see an interest of theirs. In the United States they are on both sides of the political divide: with the Democratic party and with the Republican party. They did it in the bipolar world of communism versus capitalism. Karl Marx, Trotsky and Lenin⁶⁷ among others were some of the Yahūd lodged into the communist bloc. Alan Greenspan, Milton Friedman and Armand Hammer⁶⁸ among others were some figures of Yahūd lodged into the capitalist camp.

In South Africa, Yahūd were firmly entrenched in the apartheid regime with the diamond cartel of the Oppenheims⁶⁹ and the military linkage with Zionist Israel, and on the other side there were the Joe Slovos, Helen Suzmans, and Harry Schwartzs of the ANC and progressive persuasions.⁷⁰ In Britain, France, and Russia, not to mention many other countries, these Yahūd are located inside all power positions (opposing parties, corporations, trade unions, think tanks, etc.) and they can never lose because they are with everyone, for the sake of Zion!

Obviously, someone is going to win, and they want to reap the profit, and they do! In the end, the Israeli interest is served, while the gentiles wind up losing and absentmindedly believing that there is such a thing as a serious difference between the polarizing parties and factions that appear at odds!

This is obviously an agenda for people who have no principles. Allah (ﷻ) is not their highest authority. They observe no covenant. They achieve their Israeli objectives by playing the ropes, which they have perfected throughout the seasons and centuries. These Israelis by instinct give more credence to earthly contracts than they do to some divine covenant. They have more confidence in the military forces of self-styled superpowers than they have in an abstract Almighty.

Had these Israelis been honest and faithful to the covenant with their Lord, they would not have had to enter into military arrangements with worldly powers that would violate the terms of their divine covenant. Not acknowledging that there can be no interest or well-being unless it is in conjunction with God, this Israeli spirit tore asunder the Mosaic law in the name of their self-defined national interest or for “preemptive” justifications.

There are some Muslims today who think Yahūd are too doctrinaire to align themselves with powers and interests that would spell the end of a few Yahūdī lives here and there. These Muslims do not read the Qur’an, and besides that they do not follow events in the world around them. The Qur’an makes it abundantly clear that Yahūd are willing to trash God, *nastaghfir-allāh*, for the cause of their Israeli golden calf. Yathrib was a shining example of how they

were at military blows for the sake of their collective interest. They had no qualms, and the *āyah* above attests to it, in favoring tribal alliances (in today's world, national alliances) over the divine alliance and allegiance.

Following the implantation of the Zionist entity in Palestine, did not these Yahūd blow up a few synagogues in Baghdad in 1950 to terrify their Jewish brethren into leaving Iraq and the Arabian countries? By this tactic, did Yahūd not try to create the misguided impression in Sephardic Arabian Jews that they would no longer be safe in areas they had inhabited for centuries?⁶⁷ During the second world war, did not the Zionists collude with the Vichy regime that occupied Beirut and were they not trying to establish a relationship with Italian Fascists and German Nazis to expel the British from the Holy Land?⁷² Is it thinking too much, after reading and understanding these *āyāt*, to say that in the Yahūdī psychology there is an impulse that dwarfs Machiavelli; that justifies a trumped-up holocaust; and that countenances the sinking of a vessel or two in the Mediterranean Sea to facilitate the holiest of the holies: the Zionist Israeli nation-state?⁷³

Before leaving this critical *āyah*, it would be appropriate to further contextualize its meanings for our time and age. Hundreds of millions of Muslims read this *āyah* but only a handful relate it to the world around us. Do not forget: the Qur'an is exceedingly current for the world we live in, here and now. This *āyah* is so divulging of the Israeli mentality that it needs to be broken down further for all Muslims to absorb,

And then, it is you [the Israeli Yahūd] who kill one another and expel some of your own [Israeli Yahūdī] people from their homelands, aiding one another against them [for your own Israeli blood brothers] by means of dereliction and aggression (2:85).

It has already been noted that these Israelis entered into bilateral arrangements with Arabian factions of the Yathrib (Madinah) society who were hostile to each other. When war would break out

between these two hostile camps, the Yahūd would raise their swords against each other, killing each other. This Qur'anic image of the Israeli Yahūd shatters the public notion that the Israelis would be unwilling to kill their own people. Of course, in the abstract, the Israelis are unwilling to do such things. But if the higher material interest or the national interest dictates such deeds then they will perpetrate such heinous acts, knowing that it is in contradiction to their own scripture.

The relevant and immediate concern for the Muslims here is whether or not these same Israeli Yahūd would enter into bilateral or multilateral arrangements with today's Arabians if these Arabians are willing to fight and kill each other? The answer is yes. That is because there has been no change of heart on behalf of this Israeli historical and political reality.

This means that if the general Zionist interest is served by one section of Yahūd siding with nationalist Arabians while another section sides with the reactionary, socialist, or even Islamist Arabians, they would do it. Taking sides does not simply mean that Yahūd will huff and puff into their media microphones; they will also, if deemed in their ultimate worldly interest, be involved in combat activity. The Israeli Yahūd, as demonstrated by the meaning of this *āyah*, are willing, in today's environment, to fight alongside the nationalist Palestinians against religious Palestinians and shed Yahūdi blood if that is what the Israeli Zionist interest demands.

If the Israeli Yahūd are willing to go to the extent of killing each other alongside their allies, who have much more to lose, then these Israeli Yahūd would be much more willing to let their hosts kill themselves without any direct Israeli involvement. Just as the Israeli Yahūd could have cared less if the Arabians of the pre-Islamic authority (Yathrib) annihilated themselves, they will not shed a tear if the Arabians of the post-Islamic authority (today's Arab League countries) do the same. All that matters is for them to see the overall interest of their grand strategy served, even if they conveniently watch from the sidelines or agitate from the frontlines.

In the Arabian world of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s reactionary and progressive Arabians were so reactionary and so progressive

that they were willing to kill themselves for their parochial ideals. They actually did exactly that in the Yemen quagmire and in the Polisario quandary.⁷⁴ Reinvigorating the pre-Islamic Aws and Khazraj tradition, they also went to war in Dofar (Oman), Chad, Lebanon, and Iraq.⁷⁵ And who knows where else eruptions of Arabian hostilities will invite Yahūdī participation for the supreme national and racist interest of Zion. In light of this poignant *āyah*, should we not look for an Israeli Yahūdī hand catalyzing this hostile polarization?

And then there is a corollary to all this: the willingness of Islamless Arabs to enter into agreements and arrangements with the Israeli Yahūd. They did it then, and they are doing it now. Before the Islamic transformation of Yathrib into Madinah, it was the Aws and the Khazraj; today it is authoritarian Egypt (Camp David), the Palestinian Authority (Oslo), “Hashemite” Jordan, and others lining up for the validation of this *āyah*.⁷⁶ Arabian rhetoric aside, there are high officials from Morocco to Muscat who are falling over each other to cajole and court the Israeli Yahūd. They are all “getting away with it” because these meanings of the Qur’an are nowhere to be found in the Muslim mind!

Yahūd are not at all what they claim to be in Hollywood; they are hard core murderers, blood-thirsty assassins, and war-mongering Machiavellians. Forging Canadian passports, eavesdropping on Muslims in Switzerland, running assassination missions in Amman and Beirut, and subcontracting the Maronite Phalange and the ‘Arafātī PLO, are only the tip of this conniving Israeli contempt for God and Covenant.⁷⁷ Is it far-fetched to speculate that in the early 1980s these types would facilitate the assassination of one of their ambassadors in London, England to justify a long, drawn-out invasion of Southern Lebanon, an invasion that turned into a 20-year occupation by proxy?⁷⁸ Is it unreasonable to say that Yahūdī financial clout has precipitated a veto from the United States against every single United Nations resolution censuring Israel for her tyranny and crimes against humanity?⁷⁹

But this history of Yahūd in Yathrib and these *āyāt* in the impeccable Qur’an ring no bell in the politically blank Muslim

mind; and so there are empty-headed Muslims swearing that the Muslims actually stand a chance of reconciliation with these Israelis. Such bleeding heart liberal Muslims should be presented with these hard Qur'anic facts of history and prophecy, of Yahūdī scheming yesterday and today.

The *āyāt* that follow are a continuation of the Israeli serial. In this Qur'anic account, the Children of Israel are confronted by their defiance of Prophethood and the Prophets — their own Prophets (ﷺ). The Qur'an explores the Israeli psychology that cannot reconcile itself with *ḥaqq* (the truth).

For indeed, We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ and caused apostle after apostle to follow him; and We vouchsafed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, all evidence of the truth, and strengthened him with holy inspiration. [Yet] is it not so that every time an apostle came unto you with something that was not to your liking, you glorified in your arrogance, and to some of them you gave the lie while others you would slay? (2:87).

The Israeli alibi for not being interested in Islam (as completed by the Muhammadi mission) and unwilling to adhere to it is that they already have teachings and scripts of their own Prophets (ﷺ). Therefore, they shall carry on with the laws and commandments they have. But the Qur'an does not let them get away with this false and misleading claim. Their relationships with their priests, scriptures, and commandments are highlighted. And it turns out that these Israelis harbored the same Yahūdī aversion to truth that they later exhibited against Muhammad (ﷺ) and that they brazenly exhibit today.

The glorious words of the Qur'an, which cannot yield to Israeli whims and wishes, amplified their saga with Moses (ﷺ) who was vouchsafed the Torah. But here, the Qur'an makes it glaringly clear that the Israeli attitude did not forestall Moses (ﷺ) from executing his mission, as it did the long list of biblical Prophets (ﷺ) to follow, ending with 'Īsá (Jesus – ﷺ). Jesus (ﷺ) flooded their

senses with miracles; he was supported by the holy spirit, Gabriel (ﷺ), but all this was not enough to “turn them on” to God! How did these proverbial Israelis respond to this host of Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ) culminating in the advent of Jesus (ﷺ)? The noble Qur’an focuses the light of heaven on their appalling attitude, a posture they cannot deny because their own books of scripture register and testify to it,

...Is it not true that every time an apostle comes to you with the truth that does not correspond to your wishes you would act arrogantly? Then you would accuse some [apostles] of lying and you would kill other [apostles]? (2:87).

This Israeli posture of trying to integrate apostles and scriptures into the sphere of their whims and desires is a diagnosis of a human nature gone awry. Such a human nature has withdrawn from the sense of justice and logic that would never subject the Higher Authority to a moody and shifty human predisposition. Men, be they in the Israeli theatre or in any other consolidated human grouping, should realize that justice is the product of a moral and legal standard that does not vacillate between affection and anger, fortitude and frailty, impulse and instinct. Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance is free of all these human proclivities and thus qualifies to check human aggression or regression. This divine systemic standard should never be subject to and reshaped by the fluctuations of human perceptive ebbs and flows.

Muslims should take stock of these valuable Qur’anic lessons. The Israeli experience is spotlighted for us to understand and evaluate, assess and conceptualize. These Israeli episodes in the Qur’an are not short stories of bygone histories; they exemplify and thereby alert us to the enduring tendencies in us all to do such things. The reason these Israelis were disqualified from being God’s chosen people and ousted from the leading role in human orientation towards God and the Final Day is their repeated and deliberate efforts to rationalize and justify a self-serving interpretation of history, holy scripture, the Prophets (ﷺ), and the Covenant.

Every time they were allocated power they would exploit that power and try to turn it against the Prophets (ﷺ). The Israeli problem in history is not that they did not have a government, or as some of them would want the world to believe, a “homeland.” The Israeli problem is much more fundamental and serious. As an initially chosen people they had been empowered to become Allah’s (ﷻ) agents unto nations. But every time they tasted the aroma of power they would habitually abuse it. The abuse was so flagrant that the instruments of power would be turned against the Prophets (ﷺ) who were the basis for that power to begin with.

The peculiar aspect of divine authority on earth is that its maintainers are empowered and privileged by Allah (ﷻ). If they fail in this relationship, then Allah (ﷻ) will frustrate, stifle and muzzle them. They will become powerless. And that is what happened to the Israelis. They became powerless, and as a consequence they became stateless. When they abandoned their moral relationship with Allah (ﷻ), He paralyzed their power and faulted their force. When their moral character ceased to exist, their laws could not sustain a state. They were doomed to spend most of their history suffering from this amoral legalistic state of mind that could not generate the staying force necessary for preserving a modicum of enabling power. This is the kind of power that delivers the capacity to sustain a government, making it possible to have a state.

There is a similarity between this Israeli virus in history and the infection plaguing post-colonization Muslims. Today, there are no longer any Apostles (ﷺ) but there are righteous and saintly men of God who are in the footsteps of the last Apostle (ﷺ) and who stand for the word of scripture. These free spirits from Allah (ﷻ) are encountering an abuse of power similar to the Israeli model. But in this instance, it comes from officials in Muslim lands.

We, the Muslims of the world, are plagued with kings, presidents, prime ministers and their court affiliates who spare no opportunity in reproducing a contemporary Israeli attitude. They rule by diktat. They give scripture a twist of their own self-interest, and they take to the gallows people who struggle to have a covenant with Allah (ﷻ), to honor their solemn pledge, and to discharge

their timely responsibilities. If these governments in Muslim lands were to face a Moses, a Jesus, or a Muhammad (ﷺ), they would throw up a public argument accusing these virtuous men of high treason, subversion, and being a national security threat. In the best ongoing tradition of Israeli abuse of power, they would torture, persecute, and then execute these men of God.

There are live examples of “Israeli” kings and presidents in Muslim lands who salivate every time they see Muslim activists and covenant bearers executed by hanging or by firing squad. These are not the type of rulers who are bothered by pricks of conscience or weighty moral recriminations related to their murderous ways. These are proven killers of men of God. Are not the memories of such men of God as Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, Mūsā al-Ṣadr, the scores of ‘alims in Algeria and Egypt, and the thousands of covenant-honoring Muslims still fresh in the collective Muslim mind? Did not a recent sequence of “Muslim” rulers in the Israeli tradition send these unrivaled men to death for no reason other than they wanted a God-given state founded upon the standards of scripture and revelation?

Is it any wonder why the Muslim populations of the world are powerless? Is it also any wonder why the resistance to the Israeli contagion comes from the students of the Qur’an, the pupils of the Prophets (ﷺ), and the inheritors of the Covenant in Muslim lands? Besides the Muslim hemisphere, there is no place on earth where there is a serious effort to anchor a divine standard of living into human societies. There were parallel and questionable attempts to do such things by what was called liberation theology.⁸⁰ But that is now one of the many absent chapters of establishmentarian history.

The Israeli government in Tel Aviv and the “Israeli” governments in Riyadh, Cairo, Algiers, Amman, etc. have a common enemy. Their enemy is Allah’s (ﷻ) covenant holders. When it comes to the “Islamic threat,” has anyone ever noticed the affinity among these officials who are publicly perceived to be on opposite sides of the fence?

The Qur’anic momentum places the so-called “Arab-Israeli” conflict in its wider scope with its historical dimension, denuded of

its nationalistic and ethnic obfuscations. The best incarnation of this Israeli historical and “biblical” attitude within the range of the contemporary Arabian national setup is the Saudi Arabian government. The Saudi rulers are the quintessential Arabian extension of this Israeli attitude, which was so obviously condemned in the Qur’an by Allah (ﷻ) and the Prophets (ﷺ). The Saudis say that by implementing the laws of Scripture (the Qur’an) and Sunnah, they have an Islamic state.

There is not enough space here to explain their selective application of Islamic laws. A few examples will make the case. If a poor person steals, they chop off his hand but if a rich person steals, they call it entrepreneurship. When an African or a Pakistani is caught trying to smuggle some hashish or dope to make a living, he is ceremonially beheaded in a public spectacle, after *jumu’ah* prayers. But when an *amir* big-wig steals the resources of the Ummah — such as billions of barrels of petroleum — sells them at dirt-cheap prices, and then channels a good portion of that revenue into his Zionist-owned or US-controlled bank account, he is honored with the title of “his majesty” or “his highness,” never making it to the public square after *jumu’ah* prayers.

The Israeli spirit is alive and kicking in today’s Arabian and Hebrew officials. It sure is an accomplishment by the modern incarnation of the ancient Israelis to make a resurgent comeback nowadays and win over to their cause Muslims, “who pray five times a day, go to Hajj, and of course fast during the month of Ramadan.” The attitude of the contemporary Muslims seems eerily similar to those, “...who every time a man of God comes to them with something that is not to their liking, they glory in their arrogance, and accuse them [God’s men] of lying, while others they would slay” (2:87).

With this in mind, Muslims should realize that the challenge facing the Ummah today is not a simple Israeli military garrison occupying Palestine; it is an Israeli octopus with its tentacles extending into ruling parties and establishments from Makkah to the Vatican. The slant of Israel is so pronounced and the camouflage so finessed that truthful Muslims will never be able to see

through this monumental masquerade unless these Qur'anic *āyāt* inform their covenant-bearing attitudes to the situations, circumstances, and events in the real world.

Bitter Animosity Toward Everything Non-Israeli

The unrelenting *āyāt* of the Qur'an in this *sūrah* proceed further to dig out more of these Israeli fanatics as they face off with the Prophet (ﷺ). The Israelis appear appalling whenever they are presented with the truth, a truth that cannot be subservient to their whimsical desires. Now these self-styled Children of Israel come to light as they encounter a new prophet with a new scripture. But what is their response? They still are as foolhardy and as bullheaded as they ever were. They are just a replica of their ancestral caste.

- **But they say, “Our hearts are already full of knowledge.” Nay, but Allah has rejected them because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth; for, few are the things to which they are committed.**
- **And whenever there came a new revelation from Allah, confirming the truth already in their possession — and [bear in mind that] aforesaid they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth — whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it. And Allah's rejection is the due of all who deny the truth.**
- **Vile is that [false pride] for which they have sold their own selves by denying the truth of what Allah has bestowed from on high, out of envy that Allah should bestow aught of His favor upon whomsoever He wills of His servants; and thus have they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, over and over. And for those who deny the truth there is shameful suffering in store.**
- **For when they are told, “Believe in what Allah has bestowed from on high,” they reply, “We believe [only] in what has been bestowed on us,” and they deny the truth of everything else, although it be a truth confirming the one in their**

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾
 وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ
 يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا
 بِهِ ۚ فَلَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بِئْسَمَا أَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ۚ أَنفُسَهُمْ
 أَن يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا ۚ أَن يُنَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ مَنْ
 يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَىٰ غَضَبٍ ۚ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ
 مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا
 أَنزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۚ
 قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِن قَبْلُ ۚ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَقَدْ
 جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ ۚ وَأَنْتُمْ
 ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ
 خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَسْمِعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا
 وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ۚ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا
 يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ ۚ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ قُلْ إِن كَانَتْ
 لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّن دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا

أَلْمُوتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
 أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَلَنَجْذِثُنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى
 حَيَوتِهِ وَمَنْ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ
 بِمُرْحَرَجِهِ ۗ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ قُلْ
 مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ ۙ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا
 لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا
 لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ
 لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

possession. Say, “Why, then, did you slay Allah’s Prophets aforetime, if you were [truly] committed [to Allah]?”

- And indeed, there came unto you Moses with all evidence of the truth — and thereupon, in his absence, you took to identifying with the [golden] calf, and acted wickedly.
- And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising Mount Sinai high above you, [saying,] “Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and harken unto it.” [But] they said, “We have heard, but we disobey” for their hearts are filled to overflowing with love of the [golden] calf because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth. Say, “Vile is what this [false] dedication of yours enjoins upon you — if indeed you are committed.”
- Say [O Prophet], “If an afterlife with Allah is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people, then you should long for death — if what you say is true.”

- But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead in this world; and Allah has full knowledge of offenders.
- And you will most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people, even more than those who are bent on ascribing divinity to other beings beside Allah; every one of them would love to live a thousand years, although the grant of long life could not save him from suffering [in the hereafter]; for Allah sees all that they do.
- Say [O Prophet], “Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel,” who verily, by Allah’s leave, has brought down upon your heart this [divine Writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tidings for the committed believer.
- “Whosoever is an enemy of Allah and His angels and His message-bearers, including Gabriel and Michael [should know that] verily, Allah is the enemy of all who deny the truth [of His power]” (al-Baqarah:88–98).

We notice that this grouping of *āyāt* blasts the Israelis. It comes down on them with flashes and bolts. Allah (ﷻ) startles them with their own statements and stunts. They are stripped of all the excuses behind which they customarily hide their false superiority to the truth, their despicable selfishness, and their repugnant segregation. These Israelis hate for others to be recipients of Allah’s (ﷻ) scripture. They envy others who are privileged with divine duties. These Israeli characteristics surfaced when they contemptuously refused to recognize Islam and the Prophet (ﷺ).

“But they say, ‘Our hearts are repositories [of knowledge].’ No, but Allah has condemned them because of their rejection [of His power]; for their commitment [to Allah] is rare” (2:88). These Israelis are saying that their hearts are sealed. There can be no new scriptural communication that will penetrate these impervious hearts. They are not willing to listen to a new prophetic preacher. They declared this so that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the committed Muslims would despair and lose hope of win-

ning a scripted people to Allah's (ﷻ) final Message. The implication in their rejection is clear: if a people historically bound to scripture will not extend credence to the new message, then the Prophet (ﷺ) is a liar and those with him are fools (*nastaghfir-allāh*). It is another one of their ways to justify a non-interest in Muhammad (ﷺ).

And to this, Allah's (ﷻ) answer is, **“Rather Allah has condemned them because of their defiance.”** This means that Allah (ﷻ) has expelled and rejected them because of their *kufr* and renunciation. Their repudiation of Allah's (ﷻ) power is legendary and so is Allah's (ﷻ) inhibition and interruption, blocking their utilization of the benefits of guidance. **“Hence, it is uncommon for them to be committed [to Allah's power].”**

If people object to Allah's (ﷻ) power and its presence in man's life, the way the Israelis have, then it is useless to try to guide them, especially when the exclusion of Allah's (ﷻ) power becomes an institutionalized feature of a society's character. *Kufr* and *īmān* can never meet, like night and day. *Kufr* by definition is the deliberate mental denunciation of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in human life. If this mental disdain for Allah (ﷻ) disappears, then there is a chance for *taqwā*. And when *taqwā* is available, then *īmān* is a probable follow-up. This issue has to be like sunshine: revealing and curative.

But in this case, Israeli *kufr* was particularly displeasing and even vulgar. That is because they denounced a prophet who they were expecting, and who they bragged about to the “pagans” of Arabia. They were hoping to become victorious under his leadership against all opposition. However, they did not expect that victory would come at the price of them realigning their moral and social character to the truth. This Prophet (ﷺ) had come to them with a scripture that reconfirms their own scripture,

And when they [the Children of Israel] were presented with a Book from Allah that would authenticate what they had — whilst they would forecast this [prophetic] initiative to the gentiles and when that

which they were familiar with [the Prophet and the Qur'an] came to them, they rejected it (2:89).

This motion of turning down the very person and the very message they were anticipating for so long is so offensive and so ugly that they deserve condemnation and damnation. For that, these Israelis are dishonored and debased, **“Hence, Allah’s conviction is the due of all *kāfirs*.”**

The insightful Qur’an makes public the reason for this awful Israeli posture and signs off on their defaulting transaction,

Repulsive is the sum for which they bartered themselves by objecting to that which Allah revealed; they are offended to have Allah provoke His privilege to whomever He chooses of His subjects. They [the Israelis] have incurred multiple indignations, as the *kāfirs* shall receive insulting impalement (2:90).

What an appalling price to pay for mentally and ideologically dismissing Allah’s (ﷻ) pertinent power presence in the sphere of human activity. These Israelis have virtually forfeited their souls in exchange for this materialistic exclusion of God from power relations (*kufr*). As some would say, everyone has a price. And the Israeli worth is tantamount to *kufr*, more or less. How miserable can humans become when they bargain away their own life redemption for a worthless concept of meandering *kufr*? But this is an Israeli fact of life. It is quoted in the Qur’an and it is rehearsed by Israeli decisions, ancient and recent. These cement-hearted Israelis did not join the Islamic scripture. They spend all their resources to be triumphant in this world and, as a result, they have nothing left to invest in their well-being for the life to come. The Qur’an tells us that what is awaiting them is an abashing agony. After all this, what do these Israelis really have? They have *kufr*. That is what they acquired and gained.

How could these people place themselves in such a preposterous position? How could these scriptural scions of Zion become so

adversarial to this final Scripture, the Qur'an, from heaven? It was their envy of Allah's Prophet (ﷺ). They could not accept and accede to the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is placing His trust and covenant in their cousins, the Arabians. In their racist mind they wanted the final prophet to be an Israeli. They wanted the illiterate Arabian to be a scriptural Hebrew, they wanted Muhammad (ﷺ) to be a Yahūdī.

This raging racism in the belly of the Israeli beast consumed any logical or objective approach to Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur'anic advent. Their grudge was so strong that they channeled their constructive potential into an attitude of aggression and hate towards Islam and the Muslims. If there are people of ancient hate, of consistent hate, and of sustained hate, it is these Israelis. They have institutionalized hate crimes against Allah's Prophets (ﷺ), His Apostles, His Messengers, and His righteous folks. It should surprise no one that what awaits these Israeli hatemongers is the raging rack of eternal rift. What else corresponds to their vainglory, envy, and venom?

The Qur'anic exposition meticulously details, for all to see, this Yahūdī nature of vainglory, envy and venom. They are a people who are so self-centered and covetous that they breed racism like rats in a sewer. This racism is so concentrated, intense and excessive that it actually makes the Israelis feel dispossessed when others get anything good; as if whatever is good and providential belongs only to the Israelis as a right of birth and divine order. These Israelis show no affinity to other humans. They do not give the impression that they would share virtue, munificence and humanity with others. This Israeli characteristic believes in segregation and not in accommodation.

Should anyone be surprised by the Yahūdī history of arrogance? They carried on as if they did not belong to the human condition. In this self-imposed apartheid they fostered notions that are hostile to the world around them. In this secluded world of theirs it was not difficult for them to hate other people, and cause other people who are more numerous and more powerful to react by hating Yahūd in return. With this Yahūdī-generated hatred and gentile counter-hatred, feuds, battles and wars are inevitable.

Since the Yahūd are always fewer in number and weak in power, the only way to “get even” with the gentile is to work on human incompatibilities or “contradictions.” Race, class, colour, gender, linguistic, ethnic, sectarian, and religious distinctions all become the exploitable playing field of Yahūd. They have to have their gentile enemies turn their weapons against each other instead of against Yahūd. And at the end of the bloody affair, Yahūd makes a “killing” (that is, a profit). They stand back and watch gentile kill gentile. All this murder and mayhem was activated by those original sins of hatred, asperity and spite rooted deep down inside the Yahūdī psyche,

...out of envy that Allah should bestow His favor upon whomsoever He wills of His subjects... For when they are told, “Commit to what Allah has bestowed from on high,” they reply, “We are committed [only] to what has been bestowed on us,” and they deny the validity of everything else, although it be a truth confirming the one already in their possession. (2:90–91)

This is how they would reply when called upon to respond to the Qur’an and Islam, **“We are committed only to what has been bestowed on us.”** They mean that what they have is enough; everything else deserves their rejection. This was also their attitude to what Jesus (ﷺ) had brought and to what Muhammad (ﷺ), the final Prophet, brought.

The Qur’an unambiguously questions their bizarre belief; how can they dismiss the Qur’an when it is authenticating earlier scriptures? But to them, authentication, the Qur’an, earlier scriptures, and the associated prophetic emissaries are detached concerns if they are not Israelis in letter and spirit, flesh and blood. If the Israelis do not possess and control the Qur’an, then the Qur’an is irrelevant to them. Does this not amount to Israeli self-idolization? Is this not fanatical racism?

In reality, the Israelis are worshipping their arrogance and ambition but it is not that difficult for them to do. Before

Muhammad (ﷺ) they defamed the biblical Prophets (ﷺ); so who is this “bedouin from Makkah” compared to them? In their mind, he is no one; to them the whole Islamic affair is a tissue of nonsense. But the Qur’an is not going to let them get away with it; if you, the Israelis, claim that you belong to the biblical Prophets (ﷺ) and their scriptures, **“Why did you slay Allah’s Prophets in times past, if you were [truly] committed?”** Are these not the Prophets (ﷺ) who brought the scriptures you allegedly believe in? The truth of the matter is that you, Yahūd, are as much opposed to Moses (ﷺ), your foremost prophet and saviour, as you are to all of Allah’s (ﷻ) Books and Prophets (ﷺ), **“And indeed, there came unto you Moses with all evidence of the truth — and thereupon, in his absence, you took to identifying with the [golden] calf, and acted wickedly”** (2:92).

Was your identification with the golden calf, after Moses (ﷺ) had come to you with every proof of truth, and during his lifetime, an act of faith or faithlessness? And does this obsession with gold and the calf corroborate your claim of glorification of the One God? This is not the only time you showed contempt; you also mocked Allah (ﷻ) when you made the solemn pledge beneath the rock, only to follow that up with disobedience and defiance,

And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising Mount Sinai high above you, [saying,] “Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and harken unto it.” [But] they say, “We have heard, and we disobey,” for their hearts are filled to overflowing with love of the [golden] calf because of their refusal to acknowledge Allah’s power...” (2:93).

The Israelis here are completely transparent. Anyone can see through their calumny and misrepresentations, courtesy of this Qur’anic exposé. The Qur’anic instructions proceed to order the Prophet (ﷺ), and by extension all his devout followers, to accost these Israelis by holding up their type of “belief” for all to see, **“...Say, ‘What an abominable thing your belief requires you to do, if you are truly believers’”** (2:93)

It was true then, and it is true now. These Israeli opportunists cloak their character with religion and find the most twisted parochial rationale to cover up their corruption of the covenant. This cultural and religious justification of deviation is well-established in the Israeli contagion. Recall, for example, some years ago in Palestine during the first *intifādah*, the secular Yahūd were unable to prosecute a war of attrition and harassment against innocent children, women and the elderly.⁸¹ So the Israeli establishment, true to its historical roots, origin and character, took these secular Yahūd out of combat positions and indoctrinated them with Israeli racism, religious chauvinism, and Zionist jingoism. It, therefore, became possible for some of the Israeli soldiers to return to the firing line and put bullets in children's heads, shove women against concrete walls, and break the Palestinians' bones. The killing and maiming of innocent Muslims in Palestine has become an Israeli act of faith.

Two Qur'anic expressions in this *āyah* — **“They said, ‘We hear and we disobey...’”** and **“...They were heart-saturated with the affiliation to the [golden] calf due to their *kufr*.”** — require further explanation. The first statement from these Israelis is that they verbally said **“We hear...”** But their body language and behavior express disobedience. This is where the separation of “church and state” begins. It starts with the divergence of what one says from what one does. This schizophrenia, in Israeli and non-Israeli alike, is unacceptable.

Besides, there is an exceedingly important principle at work here: the natural binding of words and works. When words part from the active human output, they have no value or content. When there is a divergence between what a person says and what he does, it is always what he does that counts. Human beings who maintain consistency between what they say and they do are free of this Israeli characteristic. Other humans who have managed to argue for severance between the “ideal” and the “real” are also assailed in the Qur'an. Whenever there is a wariness, distrust, and skepticism due to the separation of “dialogue and deed,” the weight is on the side of deed.

Today's conventional Muslims have been duped on this issue. In their political discussions, bilateral and multilateral dialogues, their dealings with Israelis, Hindus, Serbs, the British, French, Russians, Americans, and others, the Muslims are still unable to see through this "I say one thing, I do another thing" fact of secular and *kāfir* character. How many times have the Muslims been promised by these forked-tongue powers one thing only to have those promises smashed by tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers, bombs and fighter-jets? And still the "Muslim politicians" are unable to understand this *āyah*, and see through the duplicitous Israeli character, which is now the common characteristic of all anti-Islamic camps.

After they spoke, Allah continued, "**And they [the Israelis] were heart-saturated with the [golden] calf affiliation, due to their *kufr*.**" The affair with the golden calf symbolizes their love affair with gold, riches and wealth. If money can be at the heart of a religion, then Yahūd become the most cordial and vigorous adherents of that religion. What a religion, what a way of life, and what a love affair. Their hearts are drenched with it. This is an accurate image of the Israeli financial religion and empire.

Is it any surprise to find Yahūd nowadays virtually in charge of world markets, the diamond industry, usurious banks and financial institutions, money speculation, transnational corporations, stock markets and every type of monetary resource? As their heart of hearts pulsates with a financial religion and pumps all kinds of mischievously acquired wealth, it should come as no surprise that these Yahūd are where they are today. Do they care for the peasants, the farmers, the laborers, the hard working class, the impoverished, the dispossessed, the refugees, the starving people in Africa and Asia, the moneyless millions upon millions of people in God's land? The answer is clearly no. These Yahūd have managed to concentrate world misery and misfortune into those parts of the world where a consciousness of the Yahūdī threat is just below the surface. The majority of the world's nominal Muslims, along with the majority of the world's nominal Orthodox and Catholic Christians are in dire straits, economically, socially and financially. Then as now, the

Yahūd spread their propaganda far and wide: they claim to be God's chosen race. Inferred from this is the necessary conclusion that other people are inferior or goyim. From this materially inspired propaganda comes their extension of the same logic: they (the Israelis) and only they, are the true inheritors of bliss.

Other peoples, nations, and communities have no share in the life to come, according to this Israeli claim. This also intimates that the humans committing to the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ) have no share in the hereafter. This Yahūdī brainwashing is meant to erode confidence in the Prophet (ﷺ) as well as the Qur'an. At this point, Allah (ﷻ) orders His Prophet (ﷺ) to challenge the Yahūd in a prayer of reprimand, **“Say, ‘If the afterlife is exclusively yours by Allah’s measures in expurgation of all other people, then desire death, if you are truthful’” (2:94).**

But then the words from heaven hasten to point out that these Yahūd will never invoke such prayers and requests. They will never ask for death because they know they are liars. If they were to pray such a prayer, then there is always the chance that their prayer would be accepted and they would die; but they do not wish to die. They know in their inner hearts that their deeds in this life are not enough and not of the quality that would save their souls. They realize that if they wish for death, then they lose this world, which is all they have. So of course they turn down any prayer that might bring death closer. Their obsession is with this worldly life.

Say, **“If an afterlife with Allah is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people, then you should long for death — if what you say is true.”** But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead in this world; and Allah has full knowledge of offenders. And you will most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people, even more than those who are bent on ascribing divinity to other beings beside Allah; every one of them would love to live a thousand years, although the grant of long life could not save him from

suffering [in the hereafter]; for Allah sees all that they do (2:94–96).

Their mentality and their psychology can never focus on death. The idea of dying is anathema to them. That is because the efforts of their worldly labor do not qualify them for redemption; nor do these worldly efforts prepare them for paradise. They receive what they invest; they invest shortsightedly in this world and will reap an ill-chosen eternity. Not only this, but the Qur'an slaps them with another one of their characteristic habits, a feature that is anything but good, **"You will find them [the Israelis] to be attached to life more than any other peoples."** Whatever life it is, they want every minute of it. They do not mind the life of inferiors as long as they continue to live. They hang on to life tooth and nail, even if it be a life of low castes and untouchables — a tragedy at last because it ends with death.

They want life even in a Europe that was to them a bridge of groans across a stream of tears. Yahūd are possessed with a life of which half is spent at night and a quarter is lost to childhood and old age. Work, grief, longing and illness make up what remains of the trivial life they crave. Even the Bible is telling them about life's fleeting nature, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James, 4:14); "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job, 8:9). Even life has its money definition as a Jewish proverb says, "Life is the cheapest bargain. You get it for nothing."

This is Yahūd, past, present and future. They raise their heads and their voices when the stick is withdrawn. When there is a baton or a bayonet around them they dodge the danger even though they wind up having a lethargic life. **"...And of the *mushriks*, there [is the type of] individual who wishes to live a thousand years, but even that [extended lifetime] would not relieve him from suffering [in the hereafter]. And Allah watches all that they do" (2:96).**

Why would anyone want to live a thousand years? The reason is that they are not anticipating an encounter with Allah (ﷻ). They feel as if they have no other life; this life is everything. What

a pathetic life when a person feels this life is all there is. When earthly pulses take over, life becomes a desire of the flesh and loneliness of the soul. Life to some of them is a dark night and a poor guide, a boisterous sea and a broken cable, a hard rock and a rough wind. Men who have nowhere to go, no approaching life to look forward to, will say that life next to death, is the saddest thing.

Apart from this physical worldly life is a commitment to the life to come, the anticipated life of eternity. This arriving life is a comfort; the thoughts of it are relieving, and its contemplation is therapeutic. A commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and one's final life is curative. It relieves a person of this worldly limit and gives him a place in eternity. A striving for the true life, besides yearning for an ambiance of absolute divine justice, reinvigorates the earthbound human spirit. Man outgrows his physical ties to an earth of clay and dirt; he accesses the everlasting, which can only be fully comprehended by Allah (ﷻ) alone, but which remains available to those who believe in Him and trust in Him.

Some Jews realized this exclusivist Yahūdī character and tried to bring it to light. Such people who speak about Yahūd are neither "anti-Semites," nor Arabs or Muslims; they are Jews.⁸² Some examples will suffice to show how Yahūd have segregated themselves from the rest of humanity on a racial and religious basis.

In numerous cases general terms such as *thy fellow*, *stranger*, or even *man* are taken to pass on an exclusivist and chauvinistic meaning. The famous verse "thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself" (Leviticus, 19:18) is understood by classical (and present-day Orthodox) Judaism as an injunction to love one's fellow Jew, not any fellow human. Similarly, the verse "neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow" (Leviticus, 19:16) is supposed to mean that one must not stand idly by when the life (or, *blood*) of a fellow Jew is in danger; but a Jew is in general forbidden to save the life of a gentile, because "he is not thy fellow."

The generous injunction to leave the gleanings of one's field and vineyard "for the poor and the stranger" (Leviticus, 19:9–10) is interpreted as referring exclusively to the Jewish poor and to converts to Judaism. The taboo laws relating to corpses begin with the

verse “This is the law, when a man dieth in tent: all that come into the tent... shall be unclean seven days” (Numbers, 19:14). But the word *man* (that is, the progeny of Adam (ﷺ)) is taken to mean *Jew*, so that only a Jewish corpse is taboo (that is, both *unclean* and *sacred*.) Based on this interpretation, pious Jews have tremendous reverence towards Jewish corpses and Jewish cemeteries, but have no respect for gentile corpses and cemeteries. Thus hundreds of Muslim cemeteries have been utterly destroyed in Israel (in one case in order to make room for the Tel-Aviv Hilton),⁸³ but there was a great outcry when the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives was damaged during Jordanian rule. Examples of this kind abound.

The Qur’anic words of wisdom penetrate even further into Yahūdī psychology. The Prophet (ﷺ) is briefed by Allah (ﷻ) about another Israeli trait, and is told to challenge them by going public with the pertinent information,

Say [O Prophet], “Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel,” — who verily, by Allah’s leave, has brought down upon your heart this [divine writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tiding for the committed believer — “whosoever is an enemy of Allah and His angels and His message-bearers, including Gabriel and Michael [should know that] verily, Allah is the enemy of all who deny the truth [of His power]” (2:97–98).

In the course of this Qur’anic and Muhammadi summons to Yahūd, a new Yahūdī refrain comes to light, one that is quite baffling. The Yahūdī indignation and arrogance, generated by Allah (ﷻ) choosing someone else to bind to His covenant, reached new heights of hatred and hostility. Their rage broke all barriers of reason and common sense. They heard that Gabriel (ﷺ) was bringing revelation to Muhammad (ﷺ) from Allah (ﷻ); and as they had already kindled the flames of hate against the Prophet (ﷺ), they took this one step further and concocted a baseless story imputing that Gabriel (ﷺ) is their enemy!

The reason advanced for their enmity is that Gabriel (ﷺ) is allegedly the angel of destruction, ruin, and retribution; they could not accept Muhammad (ﷺ) and his Qur'anic scripture because it was this angel of doom who was communicating the revelation to him. Had the angel Michael (ﷺ) been communicating this revelation and scripture to Muhammad (ﷺ) they would have accepted it and become committed Muslims, so they claim — for Michael (ﷺ) is the angel of prosperity, provisions, rainfall and fertility.

This is the fine Yahūdī line between lunacy and lucidity. Their raging hate leads them to idiocy and dementia. Why should Yahūd show an aversion to Gabriel (ﷺ)? He is not some human working for or against them; he does not even have the free will to choose to take sides; he is a subject of Allah (ﷻ) who does what Allah (ﷻ) tells him to do; that is it. So why do they “pick a fight” with Gabriel (ﷺ)? **“Say, ‘Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel’ for having communicated revealed scripture to your heart by Allah’s permission... Allah is the enemy of all who reject the truth” (2:97–98).**

The essence of Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* is one and the same in all His heavenly books and faiths. The Qur’an is also a fountain of foresight and forecast for those who are grounded in Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence. This fact has to illuminate the night of materialism that has engulfed even the “pious” Muslims. The Qur’anic text has the distinct ability to cheer and charm the human heart. It also has the unique capacity to open the mind to various facts of life with motions and emotions that come from having a covenant with Allah (ﷻ). Thus the Qur’an becomes a coach and a counsel.

Once there is communication between the human intellect and the Qur’an, there can be no substitute for this uplifting experience. It is like the finite contacting the Infinite. This spark generated by the “meeting of mind,” as it were, is cited from time to time in the revealing Qur’an, **“A guidance for the *muttaqī*” (2:02); “...a guidance and good news for people who are Godly committed” (2:97); “...a guidance and grace for people who have attained to certitude” (45:20); and “...a curative and a mercy for the divinely committed” (16:64).**

But the children of Israel were none of the above: they were not really committed to the covenant, they did not reach the level of unshakable certainty in Allah's (ﷻ) presence, and they did not show any sustained awe of Allah's (ﷻ) power in this world. These Israelis went on segregating God's scriptures and rebelling against Allah's Prophets (ﷺ).

Then they took their prejudice and discrimination to new heights; they segregated and even polarized the angels. Their new twist was that they are friends of the angel Michael (ﷺ) but are enemies of the angel Gabriel (ﷺ). The *āyah* in the Qur'an combined Gabriel and Michael (ﷺ) and all of the angels and Prophets (ﷺ) to show that they are all part of one divine plan. If anyone expresses animosity to one of them it is as if he is expressing animosity to all of them, as well as to Allah (ﷻ), exalted be His name. And if the Yahūd push this animosity then Allah (ﷻ) will become their enemy, and thus Yahūd will have earned their own condemnation,

Whosoever is an enemy of Allah and His angels and His message-bearers, including Gabriel and Michael, [should know that] verily, Allah is the enemy of all who deny [His truth and power] (2:98).

In the Judeo-Christian books there is no information about this Israeli attitude because these facts of their history have been deleted from their own literature. But because of its seriousness, the Qur'an recorded this heinous Israeli attitude towards the angels. What follows is a sample of how Judeo-Christian religious literature is selectively and deliberately "sanitized" of these foul acts. To show how the Israeli conspiracy against God and scripture is so thoroughly concealed from the public eye, these facts are cited here for Muslims and all truth seekers. The Muslims would be as ignorant as anyone else had it not been for the noble Qur'an.

Gabriel (ﷺ) is the angel who appeared to the Prophet Daniel (ﷺ) bringing him the word of God (Daniel 8:16; 9:21). Michael (ﷺ), by tradition, is regarded to be one of the four great archangels; he was the special protector of the Hebrews. Though angels appear

many times in the Old Testament as Messengers of the Lord (מַלְאָכִים), it is only after the exile period and the Babylonian conquest that they are referred to by name. In Daniel's (מַלְאָכִים) last vision the angel about whom he is told is referred to as "Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people" (Daniel 12:1; 10:13, 21).

In another more expanded definition there are more words but no hint of this Yahūdī-Israeli discrimination between angels. Gabriel (מַלְאָכִים) is considered to be a messenger of God sent to interpret visions and to announce good news. In Hebrew the word means "man of God," "warrior of God," or "God has shown himself mighty." Gabriel (מַלְאָכִים) appears to Daniel to explain to him his dreams and to give him wisdom and understanding (Daniel 8:15–27; 9:21–27). In the New Testament he is the one who announces to Zachariah (מַלְאָכִים) as he prays in the Temple that his wife Elizabeth will have a son to be named John (מַלְאָכִים – Luke 1:8–20), and announces to Mary (מַלְאָכִים) that she will bear a son to be named Jesus (מַלְאָכִים – Luke 1:26–35).

In Daniel 10:13 and 10:21, in an apocalyptic vision, Michael (מַלְאָכִים) is described as "one of the chief princes" and "your prince;" he struggled with "the prince of Persia," who was trying to prevent the Messenger of the Lord from reaching Daniel (מַלְאָכִים). In Daniel 12:1 he is again characterized as "the great prince who has charge of your people." In Hebrew the word *Michael* means "who is like God?" Taken together, these texts reflect the late Yahūdī belief that every nation had its own guardian/protector in the spirit-world. Angelology was slow to develop in Old Testament thought, and even slower was the practice of endowing angels with personalities and names. The apocryphal literature would carry the development much further.

Jude 9, which calls Michael (מַלְאָכִים) an archangel, speaks of him as contending with the devil over the body of Moses (מַלְאָכִים), a midrash inspired by Deuteronomy 34:5 referring to the unknown burial place of Moses (מַלְאָכִים). In Revelation 12:7–8, Michael (מַלְאָכִים) and his angels appear, again in an apocalyptic vision, in combat with the dragon (Satan) and his angels, who are defeated and cast out of heaven. This passage is doubtless responsible for the later Christian theology of Michael (מַלְאָכִים) as angelic protector of the church.

Clearly from the above Judeo-Christian definitions, the Israeli-Yahūd come out unscathed; rather they are in a favorable if not admirable position. But the Qur'an tells us otherwise, and we know better than to fall for Judeo-Christian definitions that have been devised by a class of clergymen who are interested only in their own version of history, their dubious definitions, and concocted terminology.

One could ask, where and how could a nomad, Muhammad (ﷺ), in the middle of nowhere (Makkah and Madinah) come up with this information about Israeli racism when it comes to angels? Discriminating among humans has not exhausted Israeli racism; indeed it overflows into heaven and discriminates among angels. And in the Yahūdī-centric universe, those angels extending protection to the Children of Israel are considered to be "good," whereas those angels who brought deserved punishment upon them for their repulsive behavior are considered to be "bad." Then they cook their religious texts to hide the evidence of their ugly racist crimes!

Given the behavior of today's Israelis and how they will not even accept donated blood from their Ethiopian brothers-in-faith because they are black, or because their blood has a higher probability of being contaminated with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus, or the so-called AIDS virus) and other diseases, are not the Qur'anic words expressive of this sky-high racism? And given Israeli racism against the Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims (and any Christians who happen to be Palestinian or Arab by birth), has not the Qur'an provided the world an invaluable service for exposing these Israeli bigots?

Take it directly from the horse's mouth: Jews commenting on Judaism. According to the Jewish religion, the murder of a Jew is a capital offense and is one of the three most heinous sins (the other two being idolatry and adultery). Jewish religious courts and secular authorities are commanded to punish, even beyond the limits of the ordinary administration of justice, anyone guilty of murdering a Jew. A Jew who indirectly causes the death of another Jew is, however, only guilty of what Talmudic law calls a sin against the "laws of heaven," to be punished by God rather than by man.⁸⁴

When the victim is a gentile, the position is quite different. A Jew who murders a gentile is guilty “only” of a sin against the laws of heaven; he is not punishable by a court. To cause indirectly the death of a gentile is not a sin at all. Thus one of the two most important commentators on the Shulkhan Arukh⁸⁵ explains that when it comes to a gentile, “one must not lift one’s hand to harm him, but one may harm him indirectly, for instance by removing a ladder after he had fallen into a crevice... there is no prohibition here, because it was not done directly.” He points out, however, that an act leading indirectly to a gentile’s death is forbidden if it may cause the spread of hostility towards Jews. “A gentile murderer who happens to be under Jewish jurisdiction must be executed whether the victim was Jewish or not. But if the victim was a gentile and the murderer converts to Judaism, he is not punished.”⁸⁶

Reinforcing the Position of Truth and Justice

After this Qur’anic exposé of Israeli modes and moods, the confidence-building words of the truthful Book turn to the Prophet (ﷺ) and reinforce the position of truth, authenticity and justice. These words from Allah (ﷻ) reiterate that those who deny God’s power on earth can only be deviants and degenerates. This condemnation includes those Israelis who cannot be true to and consistent with Allah (ﷻ). They were not even truthful to the covenants they had with their own Prophets (ﷺ), and now they could not be genuine and straightforward with this last of all Prophets (ﷺ). The Qur’an rebukes these Israeli recreants for dismissing this holy Writ that confirms the scripture already in their own possession.

- For, clear messages indeed have We bestowed upon you from on High; and none denies their truth save the iniquitous.
- Is it not so that every time they made a promise [unto Allah], some of them cast it aside? Nay, indeed: most of them do not commit [themselves].
- And [even now] when there has come unto them an apostle from Allah, confirming the truth already in their posses-

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ
 ﴿٩٩﴾ أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا
 مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ
 ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَى
 مُلْكٍ سُلَيْمَنَ ۖ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَنُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَفَرُوا
 يُعْلَمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ
 وَمَرُوتَ ۖ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۖ
 فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَرَوْجِهِ ۖ وَمَا هُمْ
 بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا
 يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۖ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ
 خَلْقٍ وَلَيْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ
 ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْ

كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

sion, some of those who were granted revelation aforetime cast the divine Writ behind their backs as though unaware [of what it says].

- And they [the Israelis] follow what the satans dictated during Sulaymān’s reign — for it was not Sulaymān who denied the truth, but those satans denied it by teaching people sorcery — and [they follow] that which has come down through the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt, even though these two never taught it to anyone without first declaring, “We are but a temptation to evil: do not, then, deny the truth [of Allah’s power]!” And they learn from these two how to create discord between a man and his wife; but whereas they can harm none thereby save by Allah’s leave, they acquire a knowledge that only harms themselves and does not benefit them although they know, indeed, that he who acquires this [knowledge] shall have no share in the good of the life to come. For vile indeed is that for which they have sold their own selves, had they but known it.
- And had they but committed themselves [to Allah] and been conscious of Him, reward from Allah would indeed have brought them good — had they but known it (al-Baqarah:99–103).

Here the Qur’an gives us the reason why these Children of Israel are *kāfirs* (rejectors) of this sacred Scripture and its absolutely clear *āyāt*. The Qur’an tells us that they are *fāsiqs* (decomposed to the core, contaminated through and through). Their “state of nature” is sordid and debauched. No reasonable human can impugn or censure this heavenly Word. The beautiful motivation of these words and meanings in the Qur’an captivates the human heart and head. When individuals, Yahūd or non-Yahūd, back-pedal or turn a deaf ear on its communiqués, it is not because the Qur’an lacks soundness and rationality but because arrogant humans reject proof, verification and logic. In other words, their internal thought processes are flawed.

As the Qur’an turns to address the Muslims and people in general, it zooms in on a foul characteristic of these pathetic types.

It shows them to be a group of people with digressing and conflicting tendencies, even though they are fanatical about their ethno-racism. They cannot reach a comfortable consensus. They are not a united community, and they cannot jointly honor a covenant. Their self-generated racism spins off into a jealous hatred for any other people sincerely attaching themselves to Allah (ﷻ). And despite the binding characteristics associated with ethnic amity and class consciousness, they are still not a united people, contrary to the images projected in the media or by Hollywood. They are even willing to betray themselves, if need be. Their treachery is so virulent and pathological that almost by necessity, a part of them breaks its own word and reneges on its promises. Unanimity is alien to these Yahūd, **“Is it not that every time they made a promise [unto Allah], some of them cast it aside? Nay, indeed, most of them cannot [and will not] be committed” (2:100).**

Notice in the above *āyah* how **“some of them cast it aside,”** but **“most of them cannot [and will not] be committed.”** This is so true of these Israelis. Their “Israel-first” attitude is so blindly enthusiastic that the serious mistakes made by a few in its name drag the rest of them — who side with flesh against fact, with community against common sense, and with Israel against intelligence — into the ensuing noxious consequences. Some of these Israelis today are so fanatical about Zion that they are not beyond committing murder, massacres and mayhem. The rest of the faithful are silent, and their silence is leading them to the terrible repercussions of such crimes against God and gentile, humanity and history.

It is clear that American Yahūd are aware of the violations of civilization regularly perpetrated by the officials of Tel Aviv, but in the name of Yahūd worldwide, they are mute on Israeli crimes against humanity. The bigoted Yahūdī base (Israel) is drawing into its plundering policies the fanatical Yahūdī fringe (diaspora Yahūd), who should know better but whose allegiance to Israel supersedes any expression of trans-Israeli sentiment or conscience.

The Israelis demonstrated this treacherous attitude when they reneged on the solemn pledge of the Mount. They have proven their disloyal demeanor with almost all the biblical

Prophets (ﷺ). In the interactions between Muslims and Yahūd in Madinah, these Yahūd also failed to live up to their agreements with Allah's final Prophet (ﷺ). In the Madinah Accord, established on the basis of solidarity and equity, Yahūd agreed willingly and voluntarily to a life of coexistence, mutual respect, and joint defense in times of danger to the Islamic State of Madinah.⁸⁷ But what was the outcome? Yahūdī treachery, villainy and perfidy. These Yahūd were the first to break ranks with the Islamic authority in Madinah and side with the enemy. Adding insult to injury, they busied themselves with a campaign to malign the new order of Madinah, doing their best to erode the Muslims' morale and sabotage their camp from within. The Yahūd are legendary for fighting their wars anywhere except the battlefield. They excel in the theater of slander and scandal.

Before going to any war front, in an attempt to avoid going to the war front, they try to demoralize and defeat their adversaries with rumors, innuendo, and propaganda. In this regard Hollywood has become their education, persuasion and indoctrination front; it is a well-disguised and culturally insulated instrument to sew suspicion and propagate scandal. To create an unfavorable impression, it is not necessary that things be true, only that they be said. The Yahūdī philosophy of Hollywood is dirt; throw a great deal and some of it will stick. As if on cue, they behaved identically at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), in contravention of the Madinah Accord, its letter and spirit.

The contemporary Muslims who did not learn from the Madinah Accord and the Qur'anic explanation of it are condemned to repeat the mistakes of earlier peoples who engaged Yahūd. Muslims who choose not to learn from the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) are doomed to rediscover its lessons the hard way. Today Yahūd have defaulted endlessly on their compacts; the Camp David Accord, the Oslo Accord, and the Roadmap are all in recent memory.⁸⁸ Agreements, for them, are merely delaying tactics that provide a cover for concealing ulterior motives. In a bid to continue to expand the Jewish State's frontiers after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948CE, consider how top Israeli cabinet officers were proposing

to do so. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of the modern Israeli state, and his chief of staff, Moshe Dayan, indicated the following respectively,

The Muslims' rule of Lebanon is artificial and easily undermined. A Christian state ought to be set up whose southern borders would be [the] Litani River. Then we'll form an alliance with it.

...all we need to do is to find a Christian Lebanese officer, perhaps no higher than a captain, and win him over or buy him with money, so that he would declare himself the savior of [the] Maronite population. Then the Israel army would enter Lebanon, occupy the territory in question and establish a Christian government which would form an alliance with Israel.⁸⁹

Three decades later, then Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin showed up at the White House along with Egyptian President Muḥammad Anwar al-Sādāt and grudgingly agreed to peace, so it would seem, with Egypt in the Camp David Accords. After neutralizing Egypt with the "peace treaty," he proceeded to invade and occupy Southern Lebanon in 1982CE; the occupation lasted nearly 20 years. Thus if Muslims cannot see the clear lesson of Yahūdī treachery after the Madinah Accord, how will they ever be able to assess Yahūd in the world they live in today?

Yahūd have, time and again, shown their true colors. They go back on and back out of all accords and pacts. Contrasted with this Yahūdī double-crossing is the prototypical Islamic conduct of agreements. This is outlined in the Prophet's (ﷺ) hadith, "*Muslims are co-equals. They are one force against their adversaries. And the least of them vouches for the rights of all of them.*"⁹⁰ Thus even those Muslims of limited means and capacities are expected to help other Muslims in honoring their commitments. No one escapes contractual responsibilities; no one contemplates a way out of duties and obligations.

Some early history of the first generation of Muslims reveals that Abū ‘Ubaydah, the highest-ranking officer in the Islamic armed forces during the administration of *khalifah* ‘Umar, wrote to ‘Umar saying, “One of our bondsmen promised a town in Iraq security [from military action].” Abū ‘Ubaydah asked ‘Umar his opinion about this security guarantee coming from a very low-ranking Muslim. ‘Umar wrote back saying that Allah (ﷻ) has amplified the emphasis placed on pledges, and that no one is honorable unless he fulfills his pledges. “Fulfill the pledge and move on,” was his order.⁹¹ This incident not only shows how important it is to honor one’s word, but it also shows how consolidated, integrated and united the Muslims are supposed to be. In similar circumstances, the learned elders of Yahūd would have found ample excuses to annul their word of honor, especially if it came from a low-ranking individual.

And [even now] when there has come unto them an apostle from Allah, confirming the truth already in their possession, some of those who were granted revelation aforetime cast the divine Writ behind their backs as though unaware [of what it says] (2:101).

This is yet another convenient way for Yahūd to dodge their responsibilities: they looked askance when it came to this last and lasting word from Allah (ﷻ). They knew the covenant they had made with God stipulated that they acknowledge all of God’s Prophets and all divinely commissioned Apostles (ﷺ). Yet, confronted by the heavenly Text, the Qur’an, that authenticates their own scripture, what did they do? They turned their backs and ignored it. In doing so they denied not only the Qur’an but also their own scripture, which foretold the last Prophet (ﷺ). To them, everything is irrelevant: message and messenger; the Qur’an and Muhammad (ﷺ), and by extension Moses (ﷺ) and the Torah; and even Allah Himself (ﷻ).

This *āyah* in the Qur’an is notably contemptuous of those who were given scripture only to have it taken away due to their

insolence. Allah (ﷻ) presented the last Word to their faces and they turned their backs. Had they been illiterate “pagans,” or scripture-less “heathens,” their act might have had some explanation. But these are Yahūd who received God’s word, were familiar with God’s Book, and who understood God’s message. They were well-acquainted with Prophets (ﷺ) and scriptures. They had experienced divine guidance and light. So what did they do? Upon listening to the Qur’an, they rejected and dishonored Allah’s (ﷻ) sacred and standard Scripture. They belittled what Allah (ﷻ) had to say; no longer were God’s words considered relevant. O children of Israel! How arrogant and cavalier can you be?!

Exemplifying the racist nature of the Children of Israel are several events dating back to the first generation of Muslims. It is well documented in Arabian history that the Yahūd of Madinah, before the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ), would taunt the Aws and the Khazraj with anticipation of the advent of the final prophet. But when the final prophet turned out to be an Arab they wondered about him, questioned him, and then rejected him.

They also withdrew their words forecasting his advent. Three men publicly confronted Yahūd. They were Mu’adh ibn Jabal, Bishr ibn al-Barā’, and Dāwūd ibn Salamah. They said, “O Yahūdī people! Be conscious of Allah and resign to His will. You were the ones who envisioned the emergence of Muhammad while we were idolatrous people. You were the ones who would tell us that he was coming, and you would also describe his qualities.”

To this a Yahūdī of the Banū al-Naḍīr clan replied, “But he [Muhammad] did not come to us with things we are familiar with. He is not the one we spoke to you about.” Allah (ﷻ) responded by the Qur’anic words,

And whenever there came unto them [the Israelis] a [new] revelation from Allah, confirming the truth already in their possession and [bear in mind that] they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they

would deny it. And Allah's rejection is the due of all who deny the truth (2:89).

In another historical reference to Yahūdī-Arabian relations, it is said that in the internecine Arabian aggressions, Yahūd were harmed at times. And Yahūd would, through the words of the Torah, find comfort in the descriptions of Muhammad (ﷺ), a man who would be God's apostle and with whom they would fight the Arabians. But when Muhammad (ﷺ) did come they despised and rejected him. They did so out of jealousy, envy, and false pride. They would say that the Prophets (ﷺ) belong to the pedigree of Israel while Muhammad (ﷺ) was descended from Ismā'il (ﷺ).⁹²

Is it then impossible for the Israelis to accuse Muhammad (ﷺ) and Jesus (ﷺ) of being liars and impostors (*nastaghfir-allāh*) as they do? Are these Israelis beyond their racist pale if they kill such Prophets as Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ), as they did? Their only criterion for validity of prophethood is that each and every prophet should have the Israeli mark of approval, as if the Israeli tribal and racist commune has become the clearing agency for God's Messengers and emissaries (ﷺ). Without their "country club" endorsement, the Prophets (ﷺ) are frauds and liars (*nastaghfir-allāh*).

In another Qur'anic *āyah*, Allah (ﷻ) makes it abundantly clear that these Israelis knew who Muhammad (ﷺ) was, "**Those to whom We have given scripture know him [Muhammad] as they know their own sons**" (2:146). This *āyah* is proof-positive that Yahūd knew all about Muhammad (ﷺ). So, as they did with the Aws and the Khazraj in the first Islamic decade, they avoid all public mention of this issue today. Have you ever heard of any Yahūd inviting Muslims, or Rabbis inviting Imams, to discuss the character, history, particulars, and message of Muhammad (ﷺ)? This is yet another indirect admission that, in their most cogent reflections, these Yahūd know Muhammad (ﷺ) is the prophet they awaited. They knew him then, and they know him now. The Rebbes, the rabbis, and the sages, they all know, but they all try to run away from the Muhammadi fact, the Muhammadi truth, and the Muhammadi reality.

And they [the Israelis] follow what the satans dictated during Sulaymān's reign — for it was not Sulaymān who denied the truth, but those satans denied it by teaching people sorcery — and [they follow] that which has come down through the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt, even though these two never taught it to anyone without first declaring, “We are but a temptation to evil: do not, then, deny the truth [of Allah's power]!” And they learn from these two how to create discord between a man and his wife; but whereas they can harm none thereby save by Allah's leave, they acquire a knowledge that only harms themselves and does not benefit them although they know, indeed, that he who acquires this [knowledge] shall have no share in the good of the life to come. For vile indeed is that for which they have sold their own selves, had they but known it. And had they but committed themselves [to Allah] and been conscious of Him, reward from Allah would indeed have brought them good — had they but known it (2:102–103).

In this anecdote, these Israelis exhibit yet another of their *kufir* habits. And yes: there they go again. They leave what Allah (ﷻ) says and cling to what the devils say. Here they listen to the demonic powers at work during the rule of Sulaymān the Prophet (ﷺ – in Israeli parlance, *King Solomon*). Sulaymān (ﷺ) was not under the influence of this *kufir*; it was the devils of that time who were trying to peddle and proliferate *kufir*. This they did by trying to teach people a form of magic, indoctrinate them with the certainty of predictability, or convince them of “virtual reality.” To this end these Israeli masters of deceit would mislead people about Sulaymān (ﷺ), saying he was a man of marvels — a magician, a wizard. Sulaymān (ﷺ) was allegedly able to do the impossible by applying his spell and mystique, an art he mastered to get incredible things done. But the Qur'an denies that Sulaymān (ﷺ) was a sorcerer or magician, “**But Sulaymān did not deny Allah [’s power].**”

In this context the Qur'an equates magic and *kufṛ*, as if to say that manipulating and disguising the facts about reality (magical illusions) is tantamount to manipulating and disguising the facts about God (*kufṛ*). And Sulaymān (ﷺ) is immune from these charges. Rather it is some diabolic forces that are involved in such things, **“Rather it is the evil spirits who deny [the power of] Allah and teach people black magic.”**

Then Allah (ﷻ) invalidates the claim that magical powers descended from Him upon the two angels in Babylon, **“And neither was it [magic] cast [from on high] upon the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt.”** It appears that there was some rumor circulating about these two angels. Either Yahūd or the demonic powers claimed that these two angels were familiar with magic, voodoo or witchcraft, and that they (the angels) were teaching it to people. The self-aggrandizing suggestion was that this magic was in a way *revealed* to the Children of Israel. The Qur'an disproves this sordid distortion of the facts, and declares that these two angels were sent as a test and a challenge to the people. These angels would warn anyone approaching them to learn the particulars of sense manipulation, **“We are but a temptation to evil.”** Essentially, Hārūt and Mārūt (ﷺ) had neutral knowledge, but they knew that this knowledge could be abused and so they warned people about this; but some people, knowing that the knowledge could be misused, exploited it for their own evil ends.

Here again the Qur'an maintains soothsaying, sorcery, and the act of teaching them, to be forms of *kufṛ*. This was pointed out by the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt (ﷺ), themselves. But some people, even after being cautioned against learning such things, would still insist on being taught, and consequently the sedition of such pursuits follows, **“And they learn from these two how to create discord between a man and his wife.”** This discord and harm were precisely what the angels were warning against.

At this point of human involvement in altering reality or the appearance of reality, Allah (ﷻ) states a universal truth: nothing whatsoever happens in life and existence except by Allah's (ﷻ) calculation and permission, **“they can harm none thereby save by**

Allah's leave." It is by Allah's (ﷻ) license that efforts have effects. It is by Allah's (ﷻ) permit that effects have their results. This ground rule has to become vividly clear in the heart and mind of every committed Muslim. It has to dwell securely in his conscience. A simple example of this fact is to say that if you drill a hole in a ship, the ship will sink. But there may be incidents when drilling a hole in a ship does not cause it to sink. This divine interference in the cause-and-effect dynamic is elaborated upon extensively in *Sūrah al-Kahf* (The Cave, chapter 18).

The same divine dynamic was at work when Namrūd⁹³ had Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) thrown into the fire. Fire burns but Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was not burned; he did not die, nor did he suffer in the fire. The fire, by Allah's (ﷻ) imposition between cause and effect and His larger plan for Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), became a breeze and peace. This dynamic is also at work in the type of "cabalistic" manipulation that seeks to break up husband-and-wife relationships. The ultimate result rests in the divine calculation. Cause and effect, contrary to secular and mechanical indoctrination, have the will of Allah (ﷻ) in them. The humanly-observed mechanism of cause and effect works when Allah (ﷻ) wants it to work, which may be almost all the time. But if there is that "freak" occurrence when it does not work, it is not because of some inexplicable interference of some sort; it is because Allah (ﷻ) is involved in everything we do, even though our routine mechanisms and habits overlook this fact. The reality of the matter touched upon here is the ever-present involvement of Allah (ﷻ) in human actions and motions.

Then the guiding words of the Qur'an unequivocally state that this type of acquired macabre knowledge is harmful to whoever acquires it, **"They [who learn this knowledge] learn about what harms themselves and does them no good."** It is enough that this technique is tantamount to *kufr* for it to be solidly evil, **"For, indeed, they [should] know that for this artistry [of sorcery], they have sold their own selves, and in the life-to-come they have no standing."**

They know that this type of occult knowledge, once appropriated, will deprive them of a share in the life to come. Anyone who

indulges in such craft forfeits the bliss of paradise. Notice that the word *sold* is used in the *āyah*. This is a keen reference to the profit motive that lurks behind the choice to become a “manipulator of the facts,” or a diverter from reality. What a price to pay: they make money out of magical performances or even psychic machinations, but in the process they lose their future selves. **“And had they but committed themselves [to Allah’s power] and been conscious of Him, reward from Allah would indeed have brought them good — had they but known it.”** This applies to those who were learning sorcery from the two angels in Babylon as well as those who were under the demonic influence prevalent in certain quarters during the reign of Sulaymān (ﷺ). It turns out that these were Yahūd who incessantly seize every opportunity to make money and generate fortunes, even if it means selling their souls to the devil.

As the Qur’an is Allah’s (ﷻ) word of enlightenment and the book of light, it does not leave any human activity unaccounted for. Knowing that humans in all ages and times are exposed to activities called *magic* or *sorcery*, Allah (ﷻ) did not leave man to figure out the legitimacy of this matter on his own, especially when this type of psychic interference may have an impact on the most intimate relationship on earth: marriage. This intriguing influence exerted by some against others was sought by Yahūd, who in their baleful pursuit abandoned God’s scripture.

Throughout history, there have been individuals who have some type of influence that is not yet scientifically explicable. Some individuals may have a talent or gift for telepathy or clairvoyance. In the broadest spectrum, this ability is benignly characterized as psychic power, while in a narrower demonic sense, it is described as sorcery. Some call it magic, and still others refer to it as “cosmic connections,” or “sensory manipulation.” Common to all these designations is the indication of some type of *mysterious* control over humans, things or events.

This area of matter and mind has always puzzled the objective observer and the scientific mind. These are areas of human intuition and perception that still cannot be satisfactorily explained. Hypnosis is one such example, in which there is clear control or

dominance of one person's will over another. The ability to read minds and transmit thoughts, the ability to "see" objects and events beyond the range of physical vision, and precognition, are all intriguing realities that occur occasionally and still beg for a rational explanation. All that science has done so far is to identify and describe these phenomena, without providing any interpretation or definition of them.

There are many other things for which there are no scientific explanations, either because there have not been enough corroborating parallels to prove or disprove an empirical definition, or because there is no way of placing such phenomena in a controlled environment or diagnostic laboratory. How does science explain the fact that there are individuals who are capable of seeing the future, or of having visions of events that will happen tomorrow, next week or next year? That there are inadequate scientific explanations of such events does not mean that they do not happen, or that they are "freak" occurrences or abnormal issues, or that they do not exist at all! On the other hand, it does not mean that humanity should resort to superstitions as an explanation and start to believe every weird thing out there. It behooves the human mind to consider these things with a measure of curiosity and investigate whenever possible.

It is only an extremist human who surrenders to fantasies and fiction or, in the name of lacking empirical evidence, denies findings and facts. Man does not belittle himself by acknowledging that at this time in human development, he does not have enough pertinent information about such odd events to give a "logical" explanation. As thinking human beings we need time to learn more about ourselves, especially when we are considering the super-sensory range of our, as yet, unharvested potential. Man is not God; he cannot know every detail about everything in life. Sometimes it is salutary for this reasoning human to learn something new each day, and to make room in his mind for things that will always belong to the area of the unknown.

Magical or psychic powers, especially involving the manipulation of people, natural objects or events, are often called *black magic*

if harmful to people, and *white magic* if helpful. In Africa, the power of witches is said to be innate, and people may not even know that they are witches. In Europe, the Christian Church began to persecute witches in the 14th century (CE), alleging that witches consciously made a pact with Satan. The persecution later spread to America, and by the end of the 17th century some 200,000 people, mostly women, had been executed. Contemporary witchcraft in the West sees itself as an alternative religion, celebrating gods drawn from various European pre-Christian religions, and exercising its magical powers in beneficial ways. There is nothing, as far as this writer knows, in the Qur'an, Sunnah, or in history or scientific data that denies the possibility of human access to some sort of demons. These demons or spirits apparently relay to recipient humans beliefs and practices that confer a supernatural ability to intervene in physical processes. Two common principles of magical belief are said to be "like affects like" (for example, a cloud of smoke rising to the sky will bring rain) and "part affects whole" (for instance, burning a person's hair-cuttings will harm that person).

In modern industrial societies, belief in magic remains strong because it offers some hope that apparently bad luck can be averted. Everywhere, magical beliefs are strongest in situations of uncertainty. In some parts of the world, the traditions of magic are so strong that they had to be blended into scriptural practices by missionaries. The popular religion of Haiti, also found in the West Indies and parts of South America, is voodoo. Blending elements of Roman Catholicism with West African religion, voodoo adherents attend both the church and the voodoo temple. In the temple ceremonies, a voodoo priest or priestess leads a ritual invoking the spirits of the voodoo world through magical diagrams, songs and prayer. The spirits possess the members in trance.

One element of all this may be the ability of some to influence others by their personal charm, strength of character, physical attraction or authority, either through sensual or mental contact, or by physical and material objects. The sorcery mentioned in the Qur'an relating to Pharaoh's court has more to do with sense-manipulation and management, **"And lo! By means of their sor-**

cery, their [magic] ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving rapidly” (20:66). This influence upon human sense perception may be one way of causing marriages to break up, as the individuals in the *āyah* under discussion were capable of doing. It may also cause friendships to break down. Emotional reactions occur due to influences, although as mentioned above, these influences and effects all take place with Allah’s (ﷻ) sanction.

Now who precisely are the two angels Hārūt and Mārūt (ﷻ) cited in *āyah* 2:102? When were they in Babylon? It appears that the Yahūd at one time knew this information. What formidably affirms this understanding is that Yahūd never denied this Qur’anic reference to these angels nor objected to it. The Qur’an sometimes refers to an event without going into details. The information provided here is enough to establish the Qur’an’s point; further details would not serve the overall objective. This narrative, like some others in the Qur’an, may have many historical and mythological details known to the Yahūd but none of them from whatever sources of history, are substantiated by the Qur’an and Sunnah. Extended discussions related to questions of incidental detail tend to limit consideration of the big picture; hence the preference here is to steer clear of such hearsay.

Some of this or similar information may be found in the Kabbalah (Hebrew tradition). These are Jewish religious teachings, originally transmitted orally, that are predominantly mystic in nature, and ostensibly consist of secret doctrines. Jewish teachings developed along two lines: the *practical*, centering on prayer, meditation and acts of piety; and the *speculative*, focusing on the discovery of hidden mysteries in the Jewish scriptures by special methods of interpretation. Those who want more information on these issues — not for the sake of accurate information but to learn more about the secret thoughts of Yahūd — may refer to Zohar, the main text of the Jewish Kabbalah. Discovered in Spain in the late thirteenth century CE, it is said to be the mystical writings of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai and his followers, who lived in Palestine in the second and third centuries CE. There have always been doubts about its authenticity, but the Kabbalistic tradition accepts it as genuine.

An investigation of the origin of psychic or magical powers with a view to providing rational explanations is an important area of research; however it tends to sidetrack larger considerations related to the impact of such abilities on social harmony. The focus of this lesson in the Qur'an is the alleged *possession* and *exercise* of magical powers, not their origin. The Qur'anic *āyāt* confirm that possession and exercise of a knowledge, clearly designated as destructive, disrupts the natural amicability of human relationships and that its agents will have no share of a blissful life in the hereafter. Allah (ﷻ) also vindicates Sulaymān (ﷺ) and His angels (ﷺ) from any allegations by those who would cite them as examples for justifying the acquisition of such ruinous powers.

Yahūdī Subterfuge Against the Emerging Islamic Community

The next integrated lesson in the *sūrah* begins with *āyah* 104 and ends with *āyah* 123. The Qur'an presses on with further warnings about Yahūd and their conspiracies against Islam and the Muslims. This is an admonition for all Muslims to heed. It shows the hateful depths to which the Yahūd sink when confronted with the Islamic covenant and commitment (*īmān*). Yahūd, indicted by these truthful *āyāt*, harbor on-going conspiracies against the covenant-bearing Muslims. Muslims are warned not to be like these covenant-breakers and God-deniers. The Qur'an reveals to Muslims the precise nature of motivation that leads Yahūd to such anger, intrigue and subterfuge against the emerging Islamic community.

One of the issues that Yahūd used to try to undermine this Islamic program from heaven to earth was the issue of *naskh*: the cancellation of a transitory *āyah* in the Qur'an and its supersession by a more permanent one due to a change in the level of human commitment or circumstance. Obviously the growing needs of an embryonic Islamic reality required updates on certain issues, which the Qur'an provided. This dynamic response to man's needs and development was seized upon by Yahūd. They claimed that had this Qur'an been from Allah (ﷻ), there would not have been any *naskh*, for there would not have been any need for new instructions

to cancel or modify previous Qur'anic instructions. Once again, their self-centered arrogance is on display, for they had the nerve to suggest that the Qur'an should have been "perfect" from the beginning, as if perfection is defined by Yahūd, and not by Allah (ﷻ).

This Yahūdī propaganda intensified when, 16 months after the Hijrah, the Qur'an instructed the Muslims to change the direction of their *qiblah*⁹⁴ from Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem to the Ka'bah in Makkah. In Makkah, and in Madinah shortly after the Hijrah, the Prophet (ﷺ) oriented himself in *ṣalāh* towards Jerusalem. The Yahūd construed this as proof that their Yahūdī way of life and their Yahūdī religion is the only true and valid one. Everyone can see, they said, that Muhammad (ﷺ) is praying in the direction of their holy of holies: *their qiblah* so to speak. This Yahūdī campaign made the Prophet (ﷺ) aspire for a relocation of the *qiblah* from al-Quds (Jerusalem) to Makkah, but without saying so in public.

This aspiration grew over a period of months in the Prophet's (ﷺ) heart until finally Allah (ﷻ) fulfilled his longing for a *qiblah* that comforted him. This will be explained in detail later on. The shift of the *qiblah* also brought to an end the Israeli drive to prove their supremacy over the Muslims on the basis of Jerusalem being the Muslims' *qiblah*.

From then on the Israeli Yahūd plotted against the Muslims. They tried to throw doubt on the source from which Muhammad (ﷺ) was receiving his orders. They tried to invalidate the authenticity of *wahy* (revelation) in order to paralyze the nerve-centre of Islam: Muhammad's (ﷺ) relationship with Allah (ﷻ). In effect, they told the Muslims, "If praying towards Jerusalem is invalid then all those prayers you did towards Jerusalem are void. You were, during that whole time, offering non-acceptable prayers and worship. But if praying towards Jerusalem is the right thing to do, then why are you changing your *qiblah*?"

This ploy to erode the Muslims' confidence in the noble Qur'an as well as to discredit the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ) evidently had an effect on a few Muslims. These Muslims began to question the Prophet (ﷺ); they, being disturbed and confused, would ask for evidence and proof. This indicates that these

Muslims no longer had firm confidence and trust in the Islamic leadership, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. In other words they were questioning the source of Islam itself.

So these *āyāt* were revealed to explain that if a directive is cancelled or modified, it is because Allah (ﷻ) is improving the condition of His subjects in a strategic manner. It is only Allah (ﷻ) who knows what is good for His subjects at any time. The Qur'an lays bare the Yahūdī intention behind the whole *qiblah* affair, which is their desire to see Muslims praying away from the Ka'bah, away from Allah's (ﷻ) holy sanctuary in Makkah and His first *masjid*, instead of towards it. This is the Yahūdī way of misleading the Muslims and destroying the centrality of Makkah and its inviolable *masjid*. The *āyah* also warns that the Yahūdī objective is to cause the Muslims to lapse into *kufr*, after having been committed to Allah (ﷻ). This particularly divisive Yahūdī behavior proceeded from their envy of the Muslims whom Allah (ﷻ) now favored with His covenant, bypassing Yahūd altogether. Thus the Muslims deserve Allah's (ﷻ) grace and care in the form of His final Scripture and this historical trust.

The Qur'an reiterates the falsity of the racist Israeli claim to have a monopoly on paradise. It then highlights the Judeo-Christian disputes of accusation and counter-accusation, as each claims that the other is wrong. To counter the added complexity of the *mushrik* claim that none of these (Yahūd and Christians) are right, Allah's (ﷻ) mercy and protection offers soothing, simplifying, and elucidating *āyāt* to help the Muslim covenant-bearers manage their course with confidence and conviction.

This lesson is one that every Muslim in our time and age should understand very clearly and thoroughly. It concludes by placing the Muslims face to face with the politics of the Judeo-Christian heritage: the conversion of Muslims to Judaic Christianity or to Christian Judaism. These adherents of previous scripture will never be satisfied with the followers of the Prophet (ﷺ) until they accept the Judeo-Christian worldview. Short of that, their relationship with Muslims seems to be one of intrigues, conspiracies and wars to the bitter end. This is the belligerent attitude

of Yahūd and their Zionist Christian allies who hide behind notions of civility and fine culture.

- O You who are committed to [the power of] Allah! Do not say [to the Prophet], “Listen to us,” but rather say, “Have patience with us,” and harken [unto him], since grievous suffering awaits those who deny the truth [of Allah’s power].
- Neither those from among the followers of earlier scriptures who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah’s power], nor those who ascribe authority and divinity to other beings beside Allah, would like to see any good ever bestowed upon you from your Sustainer; but Allah singles out for His grace whom He wills — for Allah is limitless in His great bounty.
- Any message which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or a similar one. Do you not know that Allah has the power to will anything?
- Do you not know that Allah’s is the dominion over the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have none to protect you or bring you succor?
- Would you, perchance, ask of the Apostle who has been sent unto you what was asked aforetime of Moses? But whoever chooses to deny the truth [of Allah’s power], instead of being committed to it, has already strayed from the right path.
- Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of earlier scripture would like to bring you back to denying the truth [of Allah’s power] after you have attained it — [even] after the truth has become clear unto them. Nonetheless, forgive and forebear, until Allah shall make manifest His will. Behold, Allah has the power to will anything.
- And have *ṣalāh* as your standard affiliation with Allah, and institutionalize spending of your capital [to those in need]; for, whatever good deed you send ahead for your own selves, you shall find it with Allah. Behold, Allah sees all that you do (al-Baqarah:104–110).

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا
وَأَسْمِعُوا ۗ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾ مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ
خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو
الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٠٥﴾ مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ
مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا ۗ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ أَلَمْ
تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ
ذُورِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا
رُسُلَكُمْ كَمَا سَأَلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ
بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ
الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا ۖ مِنْ عِنْدِ
أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۗ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا ۚ حَتَّىٰ
يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَأَتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۗ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

This lesson begins with a call to those who are committed to Allah's (ﷻ) ascendancy and power. They are distinguished by the title *al-ladhīna āmanū* that endears them to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). With this designation they are told by Allah (ﷻ) not to say to the Prophet (ﷺ), “Listen to us.” Instead, they should say more politely, “Have patience with us.” If one says, “Listen to me,” it has a “power” implication — that of dictating to the listener. “Be patient with me,” is almost synonymous, but without the power implication. And because this choice of words reflects a power issue, and thus a frame of mind, Allah (ﷻ) has chosen the word *kufr* in this *āyah* for those who belittle or try to diminish the power of Allah's (ﷻ) authority,

O you who have committed yourselves [to Allah's power]. Do not say, “Listen to us,” but say, “Have patience with us,” and heed [what the Prophet says], since acute anguish awaits those who deny the truth [of Allah's power] (2:104).

Further evidence of the insulting habits of Yahūd is provided by their play with words. In this case they would distort slightly the pronunciation of the Arabic word *rā'inā*, thus changing its neutral meaning into a negative one. The Yahūd could not openly insult the Prophet (ﷺ) as public outrage would have isolated them even further; so instead they would play with the emphasis of a word that would cause insult to him. These word-games are a coward's way of showing malice. For this reason, and to protect the honorable character of Muhammad (ﷺ) the early Muslims were instructed to avoid the use of a word that could be abused by Yahūd. Muslims should note that the personality and honor of the Prophet (ﷺ) are the concerns of Allah (ﷻ), and they should therefore be of even greater concern to His devout subjects. In this context the use of one neutral word that had the potential to malign the Prophet (ﷺ) was cause enough for Allah (ﷻ) to reveal eternal words, safeguarding and shielding Muhammad (ﷺ) from the venom of his opponents.

Compare this supervision of Allah (ﷻ) for His chosen Prophet with the modern “liberal” mentality of Muslims and Christians when it comes to the treatment of Jesus (ﷺ) and Muhammad (ﷺ). The liberal Muslims and Christians have been influenced by Yahūdī “freedom of thought” propaganda, that does not object if a Hollywood film shows Jesus (ﷺ) entertaining sexual ideas and emotions while on the cross. In the mid-1980s, a film shown all over the world depicted the lust of Christ! And barely a finger was raised in protest. Called *The Last Temptation of Christ*, it was even acclaimed by some critics.⁹⁵ There have also been nonsensical presentations of Jesus (ﷺ) as a “superstar” and a “Yahūdī.” Who knows what more may be done to diminish the character of one of Allah’s dear Apostles and Prophets (ﷺ) in the future.

As if that were not enough, the Yahūdī-dominated Hollywood film industry does not spare other Prophets of Allah (ﷻ) either. Moses (ﷺ) and others have also been depicted unfavorably. All this is done in the name of freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. Freedom is a central theme with a holy purpose when it comes to the defamation of God’s Prophets (ﷺ). But dare anyone invoke “freedom” of thought, expression and the press when it comes to criticizing and chiding the Israelis for their insults and accusations, their misbehavior and their ill-treatment of God’s privileged Prophets (ﷺ)? Any rebuke of the Israelis for their offenses is immediately branded anti-Semitism, and there is no tolerance whatsoever for any thought or idea that is perceived as anti-Semitic.

For more than 1,400 years, however, the enemies of Islam were unable to disparage and defame the character of the noble Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). But now that they are in monopolistic control of the Western media machinery, these Yahūd are targeting his character and personality too. The Salman Rushdie episode is merely the opening salvo in this assault on the impeccable character of the Prophet (ﷺ).⁹⁶ The Danish cartoons depicting him as a terrorist, misogynist, and pedophile (*nastaghfir-allāh*) are one of the multiple fronts in the so-called War on Terror.⁹⁷ “Liberal” Muslims would deny the objectives of this *āyah*. They say let people express them-

selves; besides “there is no harm in words.” Some of their contorted minds would even say this *āyah* goes too far, as it violates freedom of speech and expression! This is what happens when love of the Prophet (ﷺ) dies in the hearts of Muslims. Unfortunately, there are also people who say they are Muslims but who work day and night, individually and jointly, to detach the Muslim heart from its fervent allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ).

Some of these arrogant people are from Najd, the geographical area located in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, where Riyadh, the capital of “Saudi Arabia,” is located. There is a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) to the effect that the two generations, or two horns, of Shayṭān will appear from Najd.⁹⁸ They preach that Muhammad (ﷺ) was just a Prophet who has passed away with the lapse of his time and age. They insist that he was not a prophet whose political example and social lifestyle, whose ideological character and stately decisions, whose Sunnah and Sīrah are to be followed forever.⁹⁹ When, by the efforts of these Saudi-nurtured individuals, the Prophet (ﷺ) is confined to his generation, limited to Makkah and Madinah, and locked up in the books of history, then it becomes easy for Yahūd to come along and take advantage of an Ummah adrift from its Leader (ﷺ).

They use the likes of Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Irshad Manji, Asra Nomani and whoever else has a talent for defamation.¹⁰⁰ And to cover their true intent, they call themselves the Anti Defamation League! Where was the cry for freedom of expression when Sayyid Quṭb was not allowed to express himself? He was sent to the gallows for his opinions. Where were these liberal champions of freedom? In Morocco, the Muslim scholar ‘Abd al-Salām Yāsīn was not allowed to communicate his ideas to the public.¹⁰¹ Where were these advocates of free speech for him? Is the liberal mind so distorted that it is blind to a discriminatory definition of freedom?

Rushdie should have all the freedom but Yāsīn should be denied all possible venues of freedom. Why is freedom allocated in such a way? Rushdie is given an audience in the White House with president Bill Clinton and then chauffeured from one TV and radio

program to another, while Sheikh Yāsīn in Morocco is either behind bars or under house arrest simply for refusing to agree with the Zionists' worldview.¹⁰² How do the liberal Muslims square this in their minds? Apparently they do not have to if they have drained their hearts of love and respect for the honorable Prophet (ﷺ). Thus it would seem that one of the prerequisites for becoming a "liberal" Muslim is to lose that emotional and spiritual attachment to Allah's Prophet (ﷺ).

This prophet-bashing is nothing new to Yahūd. Their crimes and misdemeanors against prophets are legendary. The faultless Qur'an talks about non-Israeli peoples of scripture who were reviled by Yahūd simply because Allah (ﷻ) had transferred His covenant to non-Israelis. This stirs the deepest hysterical feelings in Yahūd. This is reason enough for committed Muslims to be on their guard against this Yahūdī fact of life,

Neither those from among the followers of earlier revelation who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's authority], nor those who ascribe divinity and power to other beings beside Allah, would like to see any good ever bestowed upon you from on high by your Sustainer; but Allah singles out for His grace whom He wills — for Allah is limitless in His great bounty (2:105).

In these defining words, Allah (ﷻ) informs Muslims that those Jews and Christians who are *kāfir*s (those who deny the power-presence of God in earthly affairs), and the *mushrik* (who, in addition to denying a God of power in human affairs, also deny a God of divinity and ultimate authority) are equally envious of the Muslim recipients of His favors and bounties. Even if God tells them that He decides whom He wants to carry His trust and to implement His program, they still feel bitter towards Muslims for becoming the human instruments of Allah's (ﷻ) will on earth.

This hatred for Muslims is so deep-rooted and profound that it cannot be hidden. It is such that they treat Muslims unfairly and unequally, then and now. It is seen in their contemporary attempts

to eliminate Islam from Europe. They tell us that Europe has an immigration problem; they do not admit that in reality Europe has an “Islamic problem.” Their hatred of Muslims is so consuming that they are not willing to accept secular Turkey into the European Union because Turkey’s population is Muslim. Turkey has officially been secular for nearly a century, is a full member of NATO, and an important part of their designs for the Muslim world.¹⁰³ And still they cannot accept it as an equal. Why? Because they know that the secular politicians and the *kāfir* generals cannot change the fact that Islam remains the dominant force among Turkey’s people; and that it will one day resurface in Turkish politics to enable Turkey to resume its Islamic political role. Compare this treatment with that of Russia, which has been an atheist, anti-imperialist state engaged in a “cold war” with the capitalist West for most of the past century. Yet as soon as it shed its communist guise and converted to the Euro-American interest, it was immediately welcomed into the secular, *kāfir*, and Yahūdī-dominated “first world.”

But Allah (ﷻ) singles out for His grace whom He wills, as the Qur’an says. Allah (ﷻ) has singled out the Muslims of the world for His grace, but some Muslims still do not know what that means. Indeed, the enemies of Islam seem more aware of Islam’s full potential than many Muslims. Islam is not a battery of mere rituals; Islam is this God-given program for humanity. The West does not hate Muslims because they pray and fast; Muslims are not subjected to wars and murder merely because they perform a mechanical pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime. Indeed, history has recorded that genocide is their preferential tactic when it comes to the Muslims in the Balkans, southern Europe or anywhere Muslims are in close proximity with Westerners. There are also many local factors for each of these conflicts, but ultimately they stem from the common Zionist Yahūdī and Imperial Christians’ instinctive fear of Muslim potential to demonstrate the power of Allah (ﷻ) on earth.

Let us be clear that it is not for any shallow reason that Allah (ﷻ) has chosen Muhammad (ﷺ) to be the final Prophet, and the Islamic Ummah to bear the final covenant. He knows where He places His trust and message, His covenant and responsibility,

“For Allah is limitless in His great provision.” And the great provision Allah (ﷻ) gave the committed Muslims is this political and leadership component of revelation. Muslims are expected by heaven to be doing Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth. “His great provision” is the leading role that should be performed by groundbreaking Muslims. And yet this role has been diminished by traditional and conventional Muslims to personal activities: birth, marriage and burial rites with some bathroom and kitchen etiquettes. From leading mankind, as Allah (ﷻ) charges Muslims to do, they have degenerated to arguing about toothpaste and *miswāk*. Meanwhile the Yahūd are laughing all the way to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

In the Yahūdī mind, their mocking of Allah’s (ﷻ) annulment of previous injunctions is only a part of their anger. Sure enough, the Yahūdī mind objects to provisional *naskh* in the timely sequence of revelation; but what it is really upset about is the *naskh* (annulment and lapse) of the Yahūdī covenant with God. The proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back was the redirection of the *qiblah* from al-Quds to Makkah. They realized that they are no longer the prime liaison between heavenly scripture and human societies. This was the *naskh* that Yahūd could never forget or forgive. For this reason they tried to impeach the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. The implication of their position is that they are the only consistent people, and God’s consistency has to be measured against theirs. And if God abolished or abrogated their covenant status, then it is God Himself whose behavior is unreasonable and inconsistent!

“Any message which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or a similar one” (2:106). This *āyah* can be construed as referring to the changing of the *qiblah*; or it could also include the abrogation of some injunctions and rules by others to accommodate the emerging reality of an Islamic state and society. Lastly, it could indicate the cancellation of some of the particularistic laws found in the Torah that were peculiar to certain phases of Israeli history. However one chooses to interpret this *āyah*, the fact is that it provoked the Israelis into trying to invalidate the Qur’an and its contents.

Recent agreements such as Camp David and Oslo notwithstanding (these Yahūdī gimmicks will never stand the test of time) there is a permanent “war of words,” so to speak, between the Qur’an and Yahūdī propaganda organs, then and now. One facet of this is the Yahūdī claim to Jerusalem. The Yahūd have done their homework well, and brainwashed the world into believing that Jerusalem is their eternal city and capital of their “homeland.”

Some of their history books say that when the Israelis came to the land of Canaan, Jerusalem was “occupied” by Semitic nomads called Jebusites, under their king Adonizedek. He was defeated by Joshua (ﷺ), according to Joshua 10:1–28. The city later fell to the tribe of Judah (Judges 1:8), though it appears from Judges 1:21 that the allied tribe of Benjamin occupied Jerusalem, at least in part, in association with the Jebusites.

David (ﷺ), who first became king in Hebron, quickly realized the strategic importance of Jerusalem as a neutral city set midway between Hebron in the south and the northern tribal centre of Shechem. He therefore launched an attack on Jerusalem and overwhelmed the occupants by surprise (Second Samuel 5:6–10). He made the city his national capital as a focus of unity and gave it the distinctive title “The City of David.” It was also called Zion at the time, a term that seems to apply to the fortress in the city. Here David (ﷺ) planned to erect the Temple as a counterpart to his royal palace. It was left to his son Solomon (ﷺ), however, to undertake both major building projects, with the palace becoming more extensive and costly than the Temple of Yahweh, to which the Ark of the Covenant — a symbol of the divine presence — was eventually brought.

This version of Jewish history goes on to imply that the Israelis are the legal and original owners of Jerusalem and Palestine. During the thousands of diaspora years, there were many others who passed through Jerusalem at different times — Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. However, all these are characterized as “conquerors” and “occupiers.” Thus in the Yahūdī version of history Jerusalem, Hebron and other places become the possessions of certain “Semitic” tribes. Even this version of tribal history is tenu-

ous because the Israeli claim of certain areas of Palestine belonging to Semitic tribes cannot be distinguished from the legitimate claims of the non-Israeli Semitic Arabians who just happen to be most of the other people in and around Palestine. These Semitic Arabians of Palestine preceded the arrival of the Children of Israel by several thousand years.

Six centuries after Jesus (ﷺ), God transferred His covenant, and with it scriptural responsibilities on behalf of humankind, to the Muslims. The Semitic Arabians of Palestine, who have been in and around Palestine since time immemorial, became Muslims voluntarily and hence rededicated the holiness of Jerusalem to God in conformity with His final Scripture, the Qur'an. So there is no basis to the exclusivist Israeli claim to Palestine, based as it is on the Yahūdī version of history which the Qur'an itself exposes.

Among those who renewed their covenant with God through the final prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) were Jews, Christians and gentiles, both Arab and non-Arab. Semites and non-Semites were also included in the Qur'anic reality that engulfed Arabia, Palestine and the lands beyond. All these people became more fervent in faith and less fanatical about tribe, blood and tongue as they identified through the Qur'anic scripture with Prophets Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Musá, 'Īsá and others (ﷺ), who by right were the God-ordained and God-appointed leaders of the Holy Land in accordance with scriptural command.

This divine overriding of a tribal Israeli Jerusalem in favor of a doctrinal Islamic Makkah was too much for Banū Isrā'īl to accept. Makkah, the new Islamic *qiblah*, was inclusive of Jerusalem. As the Islamic *qiblah*, Makkah stands for a multicultural humanity, a classless brotherhood and a transracial fraternity. For the Yahūd, Jerusalem stands for a segregated humanity, a world of national and tribal tensions and a racist classification of humanity.

It cannot be overstated that "Muslims" themselves are not in any tribal or monopolistic sense a chosen people. Allah (ﷻ) tells the Muslims quite frankly that if they fail to discharge the responsibilities of their covenant and solemn pledge with Him, He will appoint others to this task. At the very end of *Sūrah Muḥammad*,

Allah (ﷻ) says, “...and if you [the Muslims] retreat [from the Covenant], He will place in your stead others who will not be like you [in your covenant failure]” (47:38).

The *āyāt* proceed by placing God’s covenant subjects in the right frame of mind away from tribalism, racism and nationalism, “Do you not know that Allah’s is the dominion over the heavens and the earth, and that beside Allah you have none to protect you or support you?” (2:107). This *āyah* speaks to those who listen to God, not those who are involved in pursuing and procuring power solely from earthly sources. This transfer of the *qiblah* from Jerusalem to Makkah represents far more than the few degrees’ change of direction from Jerusalem to Makkah. What it truly represents is a 180-degree turn from an Israeli-centered racist and nationalist world to an Islamic-centered, humane and fraternal world. In this sense those Muslims who feel that they are not powerful enough should know that Allah’s (ﷻ) is the dominion over the heavens and the earth, and that beside Allah (ﷻ) they have no one to support or defend them.

Of the American government, the European governments, the United Nations, and the NATO alliance, none will bring victory one inch closer. This Qur’anic theme of earthly power shrinking before Allah’s (ﷻ) power is stated repeatedly in order to give confidence to weak-minded Muslims who are always under the influence of Yahūdī propaganda and literature. They believe that there is a fair and reasonable official world opinion that will support them in their hour of duress and need. This Yahūdī campaign is shattered by these *āyāt* from on high. These latter-day Muslims who are infested with Yahūdī propaganda would pose confidence-lacking questions to the Prophet (ﷺ) if he were alive today. And Allah (ﷻ) knows these types very well so He anticipates their questions and says,

Would you, perchance, ask of the Apostle who has been sent unto you what was asked aforesaid of Moses? But whoever chooses to deny [Allah’s power] instead of being committed to it, has already strayed from the right course (2:108).

And who says some Muslims are devoid of the tendency to act like Banū Isrā'īl? This *āyah* announces that these Israeli tendencies exist among some Muslims who would want to interrogate the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the same way the Israelis grilled their Prophet Moses (ﷺ). This *āyah* preempts any such notions circulating in those “Muslim” minds who would like to cross-examine the Prophet (ﷺ), more or less. The Qur'an does not want Muslims in Israeli skin. Of course the Israelis would love this because then they could turn around and say to God, “Look, the Muslims are behaving like us; so what is so special about them? And so, give us back our covenant privileges. You were wrong; these Muslims do not deserve this new *qiblah*. It is our *qiblah*, our Jerusalem that counts. And the ‘Muslims’ are proving it.”

Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of early scriptures would like to bring you back to losing faith [in Allah’s power] after having been convinced and committed to it [even] after the truth [of this matter] has become clear to them. Nonetheless, forgive and forbear, until Allah shall make manifest His will; behold, Allah has the power to will anything (2:109).

This is what jealousy will do to a people. The Israelis are so self-centered, self-concerned and self-occupied that they cannot bear to see God trusting other people. So they turn their venom against these other covenant-bearing people, until the words *Arab* and *Muslim* assume abusive and pejorative meanings in Yahūdī-influenced, mostly Western languages. Their envy of the Muslims goes beyond any possible human description. The envy boiling in their breasts against the Muslims is not only the beginning (for them) of hell in this earthly life, but also a passion not to be taken lightly. A German proverb puts it well, “Envy is the sorrow of fools.” Allah (ﷻ) gave His final solemn pledge to the Muslims, and as such Yahūd have since felt envious. They suffer the kind of inward grief that makes them fools. Yahūdī envy is a thousand eyes, but none with clear vision. Envy is the only vice that is practicable at all

times, and in every place; it is the only passion that can never lie quiet from want of irritation.

While the Muslims struggle and suffer in upholding their covenant responsibilities, these Yahūd look on with burning bellies of envy and hatred. They gather strength from each other by waging war against the Semitic Arabs of the Islamic scripture, the followers of Muhammad (ﷺ). Their envy also feeds their racism. They poison the Muslim banquet they cannot taste; and they blast the Muslim harvest they have no right to reap.

John Locke wrote a marvellous description of envy that he probably did not think to apply to Yahūd. He says of envy that it is “uneasiness of the mind, caused by the consideration of a good we desire, obtained by one we think should not have it before us.”¹⁰⁴ How accurate a characterization of what Yahūd desire and what Muslims have! This Yahūdī envy should never be forgotten or ignored by today’s Muslims, who are its victims, because this is an envy without a cure — a mental condition of being lean from seeing others eat. Just as dogs bark at strangers, envy causes Yahūd to bark at Muslims through Hollywood. There are some Muslim toy-scholars who are in vogue in the world today because they skip this Qur’anic characterization of Banū Isrā’īl and try to convince a bleeding Muslim Ummah — whose blood is pouring from the wound that is Palestine — that Yahūd are all right; Muslims can live in a state of peace and security with them. Does no one read the Qur’an any more?

Out of envy, Yahūd would prefer Muslims to live in secular and *kāfir* cantons such as the Algerian nation-state, the Egyptian nation-state, and all the other Muslim nation-states. When this Israeli envy is recognized, identified, observed and acknowledged by Muslims, then the *āyāt* of the Qur’an shall guide all who are willing to listen, “**Nonetheless, forgive and forbear, until Allah shall make manifest His will...**” Looking beyond this Yahūdī fact does not mean that the Muslims should make-believe it does not exist, especially when its existence is costing them lives and precious resources. Muslims do not fight envy with envy. They do not retard jealousy by jealousy, and they do not defeat covetousness by being

covetous themselves. They will have to resist the psychological antipathy Yahūd bears against them, but that is “...until Allah shall actualize His will. Indeed, Allah has the power to will anything.” The Muslims must press on, as divinely instructed, with their universal responsibilities, and not be hung up on malicious counter-feelings, until Allah (ﷻ) shows them and Yahūd His conclusive will and influence.

And have a constant affiliation with Allah (*ṣalāh*), and dedicate a money-giving system [to those who are in need], and whatever you offer yourselves of fortune, you will find it with Allah, for Allah observes what you are doing (2:110).

In a modern world that has no standard human-to-God relationship, there can obviously be no standard financial mechanism for the care of the poor and needy. Such a difficult task can only be properly discharged by covenant-responsible Muslims because they are the only ones capable of delivering themselves, and by extension all of humanity, from an Israeli-polluted atmosphere about Jerusalem — polluted with racism, individualism, and nationalism — to a multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural Makkah. To assume these new *qiblah* responsibilities, the Muslims will seamlessly transcend simple individual prayer and personal alms-giving; they will institutionalize a state-level consciousness that identifies with Allah (ﷻ) daily and collectively and cares for the rest of humanity legally and habitually.

No Basis for Jewish and Christian Exclusivism

How precious this Qur’an is! Reading and understanding it gives us a new and refreshing view of events. Everyday news makes much more sense in light of this scriptural standard-bearer of the past, present, and future. Scanning and scrutinizing the meanings of the Qur’an helps us understand what is happening in the world. And its discernment between people of previous scripture — the Jews and

Christians — helps us decipher their practices and policies today.

The Qur'an recounts their sweeping statements about being the only ones saved. Paradise is their monopoly, and no one else will enter it! This is a type of segregated paradise, tolerating no others beside their own selves — a paradise for “Jews only,” or a paradise for “Christians only.” And as the Yahūd and Christians lay an exclusivist claim on paradise they make wild accusations against each other, trying to discredit one another. The Qur'an invalidates claims from both ends of this monopolistic spectrum, in the process delivering what must be regarded as the final word on the subject,

- And they claim, “None shall ever enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.” Such are their wishful beliefs! Say, “Produce an evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!”
- Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto Allah, and is a doer of good withal, shall have this reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.
- Furthermore, the Yahūd assert, “The Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs,” while the Christians assert, “The Yahūd have no valid ground for their beliefs” and both quote the scripture! Even thus, like unto what they say, have [always] spoken those who are devoid of knowledge; but it is Allah who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ.
- Who could be more wicked than those who bar the mention of Allah's name from any of His houses and strive for their ruin, although they have no right to enter them save in fear? For them, in this world, there is ignominy in store; and for them, in the life to come, awesome suffering.
- And Allah's is the East and the West: and wherever you turn, there is Allah's countenance. Behold, Allah is Infinite [in accommodation], All-Knowing.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرِيًّا تِلْكَ
 أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾
 بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا
 خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرِيَّةُ
 عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرِيَّةُ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ
 الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ
 بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن
 مَنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذَكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَئِكَ مَا
 كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ لَهُمْ
 فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولَّوْا
 فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا
 سُبْحٰنَهُ بَلْ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قٰنِیْنٌ ﴿١١٦﴾ بَدِيعُ
 السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا یَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٧﴾
 وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ
 كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَبَهتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
 قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

- And they say, Allah has taken unto Himself a son! Exalted is He in His eminence! Nay, but His is all that is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly yield to His will.
- The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth; and when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, “Be” — and it is.
- And those who do not know will say, “Why does Allah not speak to us, nor is a miracle produced for us?” Likewise did their predecessors say; their statements are similar. Their hearts are alike. We have clarified the *āyāt* [manifestations of Allah’s power] for people who are [cogently and conclusively] certain (al-Baqarah:111–118).

During the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time, there was no Christian presence in Madinah; it was the Jews who were witnessing this final word from heaven. But these words are perfectly general; the Jews and Christians are both included and both rebutted. In addition to citing the exclusionary views of these scripturalists (Jews and Christians), the Qur’an also illuminates the *mushrik* position, “**And they claim no one will enter paradise unless he be ‘Jew’ or a ‘Christian’**” (2:111). This is the Judeo-Christian attitude. After 1,400 years one might expect them to have learned enough to outgrow their religious prejudices; but such an expectation is too generous as they still make the same allegations. Both of their imputations have no basis; their self-serving arguments have neither proof nor documentation. To get a better understanding of this Yahūdī-Christian animosity, let us look at what they say and think about each other.

Judaism is imbued with a very deep-seated hatred towards Christianity, combined with ignorance about it. This attitude was clearly aggravated by the Christian persecutions of Jews, but is largely independent of them. In fact, it dates from the time when Christianity was still weak and persecuted (not least by Jews), and it was shared by Jews who had never been persecuted by Christians or were even helped by them. Thus

Maimonides was subjected to Muslim persecutions (sic) by the regime of Almohads and escaped from them first to the crusaders' kingdom of Jerusalem, but this did not change his views in the least. This deeply negative attitude is based on two main elements.

First, on hatred and malicious slanders against Jesus. The traditional view of Judaism on Jesus must of course be sharply distinguished from the nonsensical controversy between antisemites and Jewish apologists concerning the 'responsibility' for his execution. Most modern scholars of that period admit that due to the lack of original and contemporary accounts, the late composition of the Gospels and the contradictions between them, accurate historical knowledge of the circumstances of Jesus' execution is not available. In any case, the notion of collective and inherited guilt is both wicked and absurd. However, what is at issue here is not the actual fact about Jesus, but the inaccurate and even slanderous reports in the Talmud and post-talmudic literature — which is what Jews believed until the 19th century and many, especially in Israel, still believe. For these reports certainly played an important role in forming the Jewish attitude to Christianity.

According to the Talmud, Jesus was executed by a proper rabbinical court for idolatry, inciting other Jews to idolatry, and contempt of rabbinical authority. All classical Jewish sources that mention his execution are quite happy to take responsibility for it; in the talmudic account the Romans are not even mentioned.

The more popular accounts — which were nevertheless taken quite seriously — such as the notorious *Toldot Yeshu*, are even worse, for in addition to the above crimes they accuse him of witchcraft. The very name 'Jesus' was for Jews a symbol of all that is abominable, and this popular tradition still persists. The Gospels are equally detested and not allowed to be quoted (let alone taught) even in modern Israeli Jewish schools.

Second, for theological reasons, mostly rooted in ignorance, Christianity as a religion is classed by rabbinical teaching as idolatry. This is based on a crude interpretation of the Christian doctrines on the Trinity and Incarnation. All the Christian emblems and pictorial representations are regarded as 'idols' — even by those Jews who literally worship scrolls, stones or personal belongings of 'Holy Men.'¹⁰⁵

The above is only a glimpse of internal Yahūdī thought about Christ, Christianity and Christians. Likewise, here is a sample of the discrimination and tension that Christians express towards Jews. Christian antipathy towards Jews, when it happens in its historical cycles, is so profound and reactive that the Yahūdī media-moguls have given it a title: *anti-Semitism*, a misleading label par excellence. At times in history the Christians have hated the Jews to death: the holocaust. At other times the Christians have loved the Jews to death: the American assimilation-process, whereby inter-marriages between Christians and Jews are causing Jewish numbers to decline. But now let us take a look at the Christian antipathy to Jews,

Because antisemitism was universal not only in a geographical sense, but also continuous in terms of time, Bernard Lazare (the author of *Antisemitisme*) considered (and this is still held by some scholars) that all hostility to Jews comprises a single historic movement. But this would suggest that Christian anger at the rejection of Jesus by most of the Jewish people, and his death at the initiative of the Jewish authorities (as the Gospels present it), was not at the very heart of the attitude to Jewry wherever Jews lived as a minority in a Christian country...

It was in an apparently secularized world that a century ago the Jews of Western Europe became citizens. The Jews of Eastern Europe (Tsarist Russia and Romania), where religious prejudice was still active, did not. But

suddenly and unexpectedly a more virulent hostility than they had ever known burst out in both Eastern and Western Europe alike. On the surface, these late antisemitic movements seemed to be rooted only in social, economic and political issues, so that some writers continued to trace them back to pre-Christian origins. New circumstances might create new forms, but antisemitism was still seen as primarily a non-Jewish reaction to the activity or outlook of the Jewish community. Beneath the surface, however, this dogma was less convincing. For example, in France the racial element due to the now-popular distinction between the noble Aryan and the contemptible Semite was frequently mixed up with religious and theological language making the same contrast. In Russia and Germany the Jews became religious as well as political scapegoats, used by the Russian bureaucracy after the murder of Alexander II in 1881, and by Bismarck two years earlier, when he wanted to break with the powerful National Liberal Party which had among its leaders two Jewish figures, Edward Lasker and Ludwig Bamberger.

The Christian tradition seemed to have little to do with the leadership of such movements since none of it was initiated officially by a Church council or primate. But a closer analysis of the personalities involved in creating and leading antisemitic movements reveals that in all of them clergymen were prominent; and in most of them they obviously dominated, both as writers and as rabble-rousers. In the Russian (among other Orthodox believers in the Balkans), medieval accusations, especially the charge of ritual murder, determined the actual form of popular attack on the Jewish community. In Western Europe one can say with certainty that politicians would not have created such vast and successful popular movements, had not members of the national churches taken a prominent part in their support.¹⁰⁶

Then there is talk about the types of anti-Jewish Christian beliefs. There is Prophetic anti-Judaism, Jewish-Christian anti-Judaism, and Gentilizing anti-Judaism. The details of the confusing race-and-religion issue make of Christian-Jewish animosities a complex issue, Jewish Semitism versus Christian Aryanism and everything in between. How hostile or not is the relationship of a Jew who is not Semitic with a Christian who is Semitic? How friendly or not is a relationship between a Semite who is not a Jew with a Jew who is a Semite? How hostile or friendly are Christians who are not Aryans toward Jews? Or Aryans who are not Christians towards Jews? Or Aryans who are or are not Christians towards Semites who are or are not Jews? And on, and on....

The late Dr. Ismā'īl R. al-Fārūqī analyzed the nature of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity,

The Christians did not, in the main, reject or chastise the Jews on account of that pre-crucifixion history. On the contrary, they adopted it wholesale as their own and, through eisegesis [an interpretation, especially of scripture, that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text], interpreted it as the gradual unfolding of the divine purpose in history. This adoption, however, broke down at the very crux of that history. The vilification, calumny, false accusation, condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus, the Christians could not perceive as steps necessary for consummation of the divine drama. Their conscience could not absolve the Jews for their active instrumentality in these events. Instead of thanking them for their role, as the logic of their claim would require, they indicted them with the supreme sin, that of deicide. As they remembered the passion of Jesus at every Easter — indeed at every mass and communion, at the mere sight of the ubiquitous crucifixes which stood ever-ready to remind them of the death of their saviour-god — their hearts seethed with hatred and resentment for the Jews as evil perpetrators of deicide.

Had the Jews all converted to Christianity, the Christian conscience might have been satisfied to ascribe deicide to a people that once was. The Christians might have vented their vengeance and resentment against beings present only in their imagination. But as it turned out, the Jews continued to exist and to reject the Christians' claims concerning Jesus — nay, to denounce Jesus as an impostor. Obviously, their existence as Jews was a blaring challenge to the Christian claim that Jesus was Messiah and God. Their survival was for the Christians a constant and living reminder of the passion of Christ.

Two more elements pressured the Christian mind to jump from the living Jewish presence as a reminder of Christ's passion, to indicting that presence as itself guilty of that hideous crime. The first was supplied by scripture which reported that the prosecutors of Jesus acknowledged the indictment of Jesus as their deliberate work and accepted responsibility for it (Matthew 27:1, 12, 20, 22). It reported them as willing and ready to assume that responsibility then, in their own persons, as well as on behalf of all their future generations (Matthew 27:25). The Jews may deny that they have ever rendered such confession. Since the source is Christian, another prior element in the Christian mind must have made such futuristic indictment possible...

Secondly, the suffering of Jesus is vicarious too. As agony and merit, it too passes mysteriously from Jesus to all men. Because Jesus died on the cross, so their argument claims, this or that Christian man living two thousand years later is personally deserving of Jesus' merit; for that merit has passed vicariously to him. It took a mind governed by such category of vicariousness on the moral level to jump to the conclusion that the contemporary Jewish neighbor is personally guilty of deicide, of rejection of Christ, of continuing "perfidy," as the contemporary

Christian is personally saved, because he has personally deserved the merit Jesus had incurred in his atonement.

Indeed, it was the Pope himself who assumed official responsibility for protecting the Jews as a specie of satanicness, a living example of perfidy and unfaith, an archetype of the deicidal crime, as an antichrist. He established a special quarter for the Jews in Rome as a kind of horror museum in which to keep and show off these specimens of ungodliness for the enlightenment and education of the Christian community.”¹⁰⁷

This historical, racial, religious and theological dispute between the Jews and Christians is challenged by Allah (ﷻ), **“Say, ‘Present your evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!’”** Whatever their worldly rivalry and hatred, they have no scriptural proof for a paradise that God has created specifically for any of them in exclusion of others. This is followed by Allah’s (ﷻ) universal law and all-encompassing Islamic concept. This law and concept make afterlife compensation and reward contingent upon worldly work and dedication. God does not take the side of one nation against another, one religious or sectarian denomination against another or one individual against another. The human submits to God’s will and does God’s work, and is thereby saved in the life to come; short of that people may amuse and abuse themselves with labels and titles that are of no value on the Day of Accountability,

Yes, of course: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto Allah, and does his best [of Allah’s will on earth], shall have this reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve (2:112).

Earlier in the *sūrah*, Allah (ﷻ) responds to Yahūd’s arrogance when they say, **“We will only be touched by the fire for a few [short] days!”** Allah (ﷻ) turns back this Yahūdī claim, **“Certainly, whoever gains a sin and reinforces it by his fallacy, they are the companions of the fire; wherein they will dwell forever” (2:81).**

There is only one rule when it comes to work and compensation: erroneous work will never deliver a person to heaven, whatever his religious affiliation, sectarian preference or membership in a club of “chosen people.” Whoever repeatedly commits sin in this world will not have paradise in the world to come. Sin engulfs and consumes such a person until he is no longer fit for a heavenly abode. But he who **“...surrenders his whole self and life unto God, and tries to do his best [on earth],”** who, of sincere endeavors, fashions his feelings and dedicates his deeds for God, and who is devoted to virtue, can hope for a heavenly reward.

It takes a person who consolidates what he does with what he feels, a person who combines the anticipation of tomorrow with expectation of the Final Day, a person who consolidates his individual self with his collective self, a person who integrates his emotions with his behavior and then integrates both with the universe around, it is this type of person with *ihsān* (seeking of perfection) that moves and motivates an inferior human toward a superior God. Thus does man organize and synchronize the many efforts of life into an effort that will be acceptable in God’s sight. All human activities are within the range of this *ihsān*. When there is *ihsān* in the effort and achievement of man, then he shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such **“...need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.”**

This is the guarantee we humans have for salvation. It is the guarantee of security and peace parallel with the absence of fear and grief. It is eternal joy and bliss instead of suspense and fright. This is the universal law by which all people, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, class, or age are justly and mercifully measured. God is not biased towards any people because of rituals they inherited or because of the race they were born into. And yet this is the very basis that Christians and Jews adopted for arguing against each other and discrediting themselves. The pre-Islamic Arabians (meaning the nomadic Arabians before their commitment to the Qur’an) and their post-Islamic counterparts (the modern Arabian secularists after their abandonment of the Qur’an) had similar attitudes,

Furthermore, the Yahūd assert, “The Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs,” while the Christians assert, “The Yahūd have no valid ground for their beliefs” — and both quote scripture! Even thus have always spoken those who are devoid of knowledge; but it is Allah who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ (2:113).

“Those who are devoid of knowledge” were the scripture-less Arabians. They had no divine scripture before Muhammad (ﷺ) and they have no divine scripture now that they have become secularists. They viewed the Jews and Christians as people with so many religious divisions, disputes and acrimony. These Arabian bedouins saw how the Christians and Jews, not unlike themselves, would at times appear superstitious and ridiculous. Where Christians said God has a son, the pre-Islamic Arabian nomads said God has daughters. And still, despite the prevalent scriptural atmosphere of Christian and Jewish folklore these Arabians knew that the Jews and Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs!

These arguments are still alive, even though their underlying attitudes are no longer openly confessed by people who claim to be civilized; and even though Allah (ﷻ) has closed this unending polemic for all time by saying, **“But it is Allah who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were impassioned to differ” (2:113)**. Long before that day, God has made it clear to everyone that all such claims to monopoly on paradise and divine salvation are baseless.

The Qur’an totally annihilated the Yahūdī campaign to shake the Muslims’ confidence in their Prophet (ﷺ), particularly concerning the *qiblah* affair. This the Qur’an equates with an attempt to stifle the reverence of Allah (ﷻ) at His own *masjids* and to undermine them,

Who could be more wicked than those who bar the mention of Allah’s name from any of His houses and

strive for their ruin, although they have no right to enter them save in fear? For them, in this world, there is ignominy in store; and for them, in the life to come, awesome suffering. And Allah's is the East and the West: and wherever you turn, there is Allah's countenance. Behold, Allah is Infinite [in accommodation], All-Knowing (2:114–115).

These *āyāt* are among those addressing the schismatic Yahūdī campaign that ensued after Qur'anic instructions redirected the *qiblah* from Jerusalem to Makkah. This breach-inducing campaign tried to persuade Muslims to resist the Qur'anic imperative for switching the *qiblah* from Jerusalem to Makkah. In fact, Makkah predates Jerusalem as the first divine abode for 'ibādah on earth as well as the earliest *qiblah*. But the words of these *āyāt* also have a general meaning that is not limited to condemning Yahūd for this particular incident; instead, it condemns anyone or any power that tries to prevent Muslims from invoking Allah's (ﷻ) name and stature in His designated havens of devotion (*masjids*).

Let us give this *āyah* some perspective. The Yahūd were busy putting together their “news,” their “commentaries,” and their “analyses” of why Muslims have turned from facing Jerusalem to facing Makkah during their moments with God. The spin-doctors of Yahūd did their best to erode the Muslims' confidence in the Qur'an and their loyalty to the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). Yahūd actually did no physical harm to any *masjid* in Makkah, Madinah or elsewhere. But still Allah (ﷻ) did not want them to get away with this brazen attempt at the psychological and social erosion that, if successful, would eventually lead to the depreciation and subsequent physical destruction of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām — the *masjid* in Makkah housing the Ka'bah.

What a difference between then and now! At that time Muslims had an aura of power, even though they did not have awesome armies and high-tech weaponry. So the Yahūd could do nothing but talk. But their talk was so insidious and their campaign so sly that Allah (ﷻ) had to check their attempts before it did dam-

age. Today Muslims have no power aura, even though they have awesome armies and the latest imported military technology, but they are unable to prevent the Yahūd from virtually controlling the *masjids* in Palestine. These Yahūd have their “security” officials checking Muslims who want to enter into al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. In other words, Muslims, for all practical purposes, need Yahūdī permission to go to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

The Yahūd are not working to destroy the structures of these *masjids*; but there is a horde of Yahūdī-inspired government officials who have ruined the *masjids* all over the Muslim Ummah, not by demolishing them but by sabotaging their functionality. Indeed, these Yahūdī sidekicks — many of them Muslim — have built monumental *masjids* in Africa and Asia; some of them are truly grandiose. But they do not operate as vibrant centers for the inspiration and motivation of the Muslim community.

These *masjids* no longer ignite the devotion and commitment of the faithful. At many *masjids*, the *khaṭībs* present sermons on Jumu‘aḥ (Friday) that are prepared by the government and read out loud from the pulpit. Would it not be less hypocritical to have a recording that spits out the monarch’s or president’s official line of thought from the pulpit on Jumu‘aḥ? And, just as the dominant Yahūdī-imperial power culture would like to have it, everyone is picking on the Muslims. The Hindus, Chinese, Russians, the *kuffār* of the Balkans, and numerous other people are ganging up on these *masjid-centered* Muslims and destroying their *masjids* around the world either physically (Ayodhya, the attempt on al-Aqsa, and even on al-Masjid al-Ḥarām itself in Makkah, in the name of “development” by the Saudi regime), or by denuding them of any *khuṭbah*, *ḥalaqaḥ*, or group-study content.¹⁰⁸

Thus Muslims go religiously to the *masjids* for *jumu‘aḥ* congregational prayers, ‘Īd prayers, and any occasion of merit only to come out brain-dead. Nothing of merit is said from the pulpit of these officially-suffocating *masjids*. Even in Washington, DC, the capital of the land of “liberty and freedom,” Muslims who understand these facts (this writer included) have been barred from entering the Saudi/American-run Islamic Center (*masjid*) since 1983CE.¹⁰⁹

“They have no right to enter them [the *masjids*] except in fear” (2:114). Even when the *kuffār* and their agents enter the *masjids* they have usurped and confiscated, they do so in a state of fear. With all the money and all the weapons on their side they still are not comfortable being in direct control of these “orphaned” *masjids*. And if they fear being in charge of these *masjids*, this fear should follow them everywhere. They should not feel relieved or comfortable anywhere. The *masjids* are by nature places of serenity, peace, security, comfort, and retreat. But when they are occupied, they should offer the occupiers nothing but insecurity and restlessness. After 1,400 years, Yahūd are laughing that they have finally ruined the Makkan *qiblah* because Makkah has been reduced — by Muslims themselves no less — to a meaningless shell where the Muslims can neither gain inspiration nor launch any activity. Makkah is meant to be a *qiblah* of unity but Yahūd, through hard *shayṭānī* work, have rendered it a city of dispersion with a *qiblah* no longer able to be inclusive of al-Quds (Jerusalem). Now the Yahūd are calling the shots and Muslims are nothing but sheep being led to the Yahūdī political butcher, whose shrewd advisers will never give up the fight until they have finally wrestled Makkah away from the Muslims masses.

When Makkah was returned to Muslim control at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) on the day of the conquest of Makkah, and the anti-Islamic forces were running around trying to find protection and respite, the Prophet (ﷺ) announced from a position of power and authority, “*Whoever enters al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is safe.*”¹¹⁰ And the Quraysh who had spent a lifetime trying to annihilate Islam went to the Masjid for their security and well-being. It was these Quraysh who had banned the Prophet (ﷺ) and the committed Muslims from entering al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in years past but then in a shift of power, when the Muslims gained the upper hand, the Masjid resumed its rightful role and distinguished aura. It became, thanks to power in the hands of the *muttaqīs*, the safe-house that it was and is always meant to be.

Today, so-called Muslims — with Islamic rituals but Yahūdī minds — have reduced the *masjids* to brick and bone (walls of brick

and occupants of bone). And they will not escape Allah's (ﷻ) justice even as their surplus cash flow lures them away from realizing the warning in Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“For them, in this world, there is infamy in store; and for them, in the life to come, dreadful damage” (2:114).**

This whole chain of *āyāt* is still *qiblah-related*, because the following one prompts attention to a directional value that even transcends the importance of *qiblah*, **“And to Allah belongs the East and the West, and wherever you turn you will find the visage of Allah. Behold, Allah is Infinitely Inclusive, All-Knowing” (2:115).**

This is an answer to the legalistic Israeli mind that thinks God answers mechanical prayers done in a routine or superficial way of which the direction of prayer is only a secondary issue. If the hearts and minds of the worshippers are sincere and consumed in their attachment to God then their prayers are acceptable whether they stand facing al-Quds (Jerusalem) or they stand facing al-Bayt al-Ḥarām (Makkah). Allah (ﷻ) is everywhere, in every direction, whenever there is a faithful servant calling on Him.

And this is where the argumentative Yahūdī-inspired, 20th-century *salafī* myopia kicks into overdrive. Anyone saying that Allah (ﷻ) is everywhere, whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim, is immediately assaulted by reductionist *tawḥīdīs* who offer scatological explanations (*nastaghfir-allāh*) of why this is not right. They say that Allah (ﷻ) is not everywhere, that He is outside His creation, and that He is not contained by it. Anyone suggesting the contrary has rejected a tenet of *tawḥīd* (Allah (ﷻ) as the sole authority) and is thereby labeled a *kāfir*, justifying his killing and the forced occupation of his property. Does not this “Islamic” gestapo realize that anytime someone is in need of Allah (ﷻ), he will find Him anywhere and everywhere? Does this need have to be reduced to the filthy parochialism where people can find no other place to look for God other than in their bathrooms (*nastaghfir-allāh*)? Armed with these kinds of pitiful rationalizations, no wonder Muslims are losing theological debates with the Christians and Jews. Are not these rationalizations reminiscent of what Yahūd have compiled in their Talmud? Do not these people realize that any explanation of

Allah's omnipresence is in reference to this *āyah*? In this sense, Allah (ﷻ) is indeed everywhere; He is to be found whenever and wherever His faithful servant looks for Him, mundane arguments of defeated Muslims aside.

Of course, it is proper and necessary to follow Allah's (ﷻ) command to pray in a certain way and in a certain direction but this does not annul the prayers of any faithful person approaching God with a fervent heart. Allah (ﷻ) is not a technical or legalistic God who must meet Israeli standards. Much less is He a God who can be a tool in the Israelis' hate-campaign against Muslims, whose God-designated *qiblah* is as inclusive as the Yahūdīs' racist *qiblah* is exclusive. Hence the repeated words, "**Allah is Infinitely Inclusive, All-Knowing,**" inclusive of all, and knowing of what lies beyond surface technicalities and legalistic feuding.

Allah's (ﷻ) everlasting words turn from the practical protrusions of Yahūd into the Islamic sphere of commitment to the Yahūdī conceptual fallacies as they pertain to divinity. The Qur'an analyses how Yahūd deviated from monotheism and the sole authority of God: *tawhīd*. In doing so they strayed from the basis of God's message to humanity. Their concept of God deteriorated so precipitously that they were rivaling and competing with pagan notions about the essence and the attributes of God. In this confused conceptual babble, the Qur'an tells us that Arabian and scriptural *mushriks* converge. The Qur'an then sets the record straight and proceeds to outline the true and factual concept of *īmān* (man's commitment to God),

**And they say, Allah has taken unto Himself a son!
Exalted is He in His eminence! Nay, but His is all that
is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly yield
to His will. The Originator is He of the heavens and
the earth; and when He wills a thing to be, He but says
unto it, "Be" — and it is. And those who do not know
will say, "Why does Allah not speak to us, nor is a mir-
acle produced for us?" Likewise did their predecessors
say; their statements are similar. Their hearts are**

alike. We have clarified the *āyāt* [manifestations of Allah's power] for people who are [cogently and conclusively] certain (2:116–118).

“God has begotten a son” is a statement that mars the glory and the autonomy of Allah (ﷻ). This is not a statement that is limited to Christians regarding the Messiah; the Yahūd have also said the same thing regarding ‘Uzayr. Other people (the Arabians, for instance) attributed girls to God, saying that God had begotten daughters. The thrust of these *āyāt* is not to go into theological details, however. Instead, it concentrates on the social and political opposition to Islam by factions in the Arabian Peninsula.

This campaign has been revived in the 20th century by the same factions: Yahūd who are at war with Muslims for the sake of “Israel,” Christians who are against Muslims for the sake of imperialism and capitalism, and the Arabian traditionalists or culturalists who are at odds with Muslims for the sake of their inherited and conventional nationalisms. In our time, the Arabian nationalists have assumed aggressive policies against Islam in Algeria, Egypt and Arabia among other places. This common Judeo-Christian-Arabian belligerence against Islam has made irrelevant the “theoretical” and “theological” differences among them.

The Israeli, American and Saudi governments have an overriding common interest: to destroy the ideological and the political message of the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) as represented nowadays by the growing tide of committed Muslims from the deserts of Arabia to the mountains of Central Asia and from the jungles of Africa to the seashores of Polynesia. The religions of the president of the United States, the president of Israel and the king of Saudi Arabia have become irrelevant as they have all “outgrown” the rituals within their own religions and found a new, more vibrant “religion” in killing Muslims. These political and military attacks against the Muslims, even though they take place on Muslim soil, can be traced to departments and institutions in the Christian and Yahūdī establishments. Here, there are beliefs and religious concepts that are either conducive to this war against committed

Muslims or at the very best only faintly opposed to it. From this perspective, the Qur'an goes beyond the bloodlust of *Yahūdi-mushrik* military arrangements against Muslims to identify the belief that sustains all such anti-Islamic campaigns.

The Qur'an places the human-to-God relationship in its proper proportion and context,

Exalted is He in His eminence! Nay, but His is all that is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly obey His will. The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth; and when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be" — and it is (2:117).

Starting with the correct appraisal of this relationship, man is more likely to understand how creation is a product of the Creator. This fact is presented clearly and directly. With such guidance from Allah (ﷻ) we may say that the universe is a creation of His absolute and omnipotent will, "Be — and it is." Allah's (ﷻ) will to have something created or done is enough to have it created or done accordingly without a physical or material intermediary.

How this divine will engages to make "creation" happen is an area that is left outside the bounds of human reasoning and analysis. In other words, the mechanism of creation beyond (or rather before) the observable and hypothetical physical laws, which defines how this process unfolds, will remain outside the range of human knowledge. Thus any human comment about this will of God to create must remain speculative and intensely controversial, as can be seen about all matters pertaining to God's creativity.

Man has to realize he is not equipped to understand this method of creation. Man also has to realize that it is not within his role (*khilāfah*) to understand this will of the Creator to create. Man can proceed with his earthly responsibilities and functions without knowing how God creates. Man has been gifted with reason, a tool when properly cultivated, gives him the ability to understand and analyze the physical world; all this is part of man's duty. That he cannot understand how God creates does not mean he should close

his mind and fail to understand how creation works once it has been created.

This area of creation, which is beyond the understanding of the limited human mind, has been the playing field of philosophers and their philosophies. As is the case with all speculation in areas beyond empirical verification, much of this philosophy, be it in the Islamic, Christian, or Yahūdī spheres, consists of assumptions and theories. Many of these assumptions are extrapolated from the realm of reality into the presumed operative realm of divinity. Some philosophies are attempts to satisfy a human drive for knowledge when the mind is not satisfied with the quality or quantity (or both) of information about issues that are, by and large, beyond the sensory range of the rational mind.

Recent philosophies (of the last two or three centuries) coming out of Europe are good examples of the product of minds that seek truth in the absence of a sound human knowledge of, and intimacy with, a God who guides thinking men. Thought is a powerful force in the destiny of man. Much as sexuality is a powerful drive in the individual, thought is a powerful drive in society. And if sexuality has no light from above to guide its connected behaviors, it shows in acts of perversion and depravity. The same is true of human thought.

The 18th-century Enlightenment was a time of “rationalism,” and one far-reaching consequence was the undermining of Christian faith among the thinking classes.¹¹¹ This effect was unintended; the project of many Enlightenment philosophers was to prove the existence of God using reason. When Christian scripture no longer made sense, the mind began to look for God outside of scripture. For example, the Frenchman René Descartes (1596–1650) and the German Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) were convinced that God’s existence could be shown by reason to be necessary.¹¹² Notice that they were convinced *before* finding the “proof” that should have been the basis for their conviction. In other words their inner certainty drove them to obtain proof; it was not the proof that generated their inner certainty.

While René Descartes was arguing that the workings of human reason revealed God’s existence, a French mathematician,

Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), took an entirely practical approach.¹¹³ He argued that on the basis of probabilities, it would be foolish to live as if God did not exist. God, he said, either exists or He does not. If we believe in God and He exists, we will be rewarded with eternal bliss. If we believe in God and He does not exist, then at worst all we have forgone is sinful pleasure. If we do not believe in God, we may enjoy a few sinful pleasures in the expectation that our transgressions will go unpunished — but we risk eternal damnation if it turns out that He does exist. Would any rational gambler think that a few sinful pleasures are worth the risk of damnation?

Philosophers of the later-18th century, such as the German Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), continued this struggle to justify faith in God in terms of human reason. He tried to show how philosophy could prove the existence of God.¹¹⁴ However, his other work showed that people could not know reality directly as a “thing-in-itself;” what is real in itself is beyond human experience. Thus even if God exists, people cannot know Him. Kant thought that a Christian could have faith in God, and that this faith would be consonant with reason. Given that human beings have the autonomy to create moral values, it would not be irrational to believe in a God who gives purpose to the moral realm.

Kant’s countryman Georg Hegel (1770–1831) thought that the God of religion is an intuition of absolute spirit, or Geist.¹¹⁵ Hegel’s Geist is not like the God of Christianity, traditionally considered to be transcendent and outside human consciousness. For Hegel, God is immanent and, since history is the process of Geist coming to know itself, we are all part of Geist — or God.

But in the 19th century, writers began to argue that logical thought was no help in debating God’s existence and examining faith. The Dane, Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), and the German, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), took opposite positions.¹¹⁶ Kierkegaard, although opposed to much of organized Christianity, studied theology and was a committed religious thinker. He believed that reason has no place in faith since God is beyond reason. He argued that people should embrace God even if belief in Him seemed absurd in rational terms. He did not think that it is rational to believe in God — but a person should have faith in God anyway!

Friedrich Nietzsche was determinedly anti-Christian and proclaimed that it was time for people to create a new mode of being, with human creativity rather than God at its centre. He argued that the concept of God is a human creation, and that once humans are aware of this fact, they can no longer base their religious and moral beliefs on any notion of an external divine reality. "God is dead," he proclaimed; the time had come for people to create a new set of values. In many ways this argument was the inevitable conclusion of an increasing tendency to place man at the centre of the world, which had been implicit in philosophy since the work of Kant.

For the German philosophers Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) and Karl Marx (1818–1883), religion was a projection of the human essence onto an ideal; they argued that, far from being the creator of man, God is man's own creation, an invention of human consciousness.¹¹⁷ Marx also believed that religion was part of an ideology that encouraged the oppressed to accept their fate. He wrote, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."¹¹⁸

The French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) accepted God's "death."¹¹⁹ Much of his writing was an attempt to look at the human condition in a world without a prime mover who could have provided a basis and structure for the understanding of being. Anglo-American analytic philosophers of the 20th century have tended to agree that philosophy may help to clarify religious concepts, without providing a secure foundation for religious belief.

These arguments are examples of what can happen when the mind leaps into an area it is unequipped to handle. This is also what happens when the mind does not have a coherent and logical scripture to refer to. Some of these philosophies are funny, even ridiculous; others are merely pathetic. All are the products of philosophers struggling to fill the vacuum inside a human mind separated from the guidance of divine scripture.

Anyone who is blessed by interaction with the consistent Qur'an and the stable Sunnah will immediately appreciate the

consequential peace of mind. The Qur'an's qualitative and quantitative information simultaneously gives the covenant-bearer a mental edge that transcends those alienated souls and drifting minds who try through human philosophy to compensate for their mental deficiency and psychological instabilities. Informed mental and spiritual contact with the Qur'an has saved enlightened Muslims from wild conceptual swings and extremist statements, such as those quoted above. This does not mean that there are not some Muslims who themselves have lost mental contact with the Qur'an and then likewise gone out on tangents like their European counterparts. Some of them are strongly influenced by Greek philosophy or modern European "enlightenment" trends. They too end up constructing apparently logical arguments or theories that once again assume and speculate without scriptural evidence or empirical proof. Some have gone so far as to subordinate the Qur'an to their postulates and hypotheses. This is what happens every time the human mind takes leave of direct mental liaison with the divine scripture and revelation.

The Islamic concept asserts that creation is one thing and the Creator is another. The Creator has created nothing that resembles His own being. Therefore, the Islamic and Qur'anic mind has no room for *pantheism* (the belief that God and the universe are ultimately identical). Pantheism may equate the world with God or it may deny the reality of the world, maintaining that only the divine is real and that sensory experience is illusory. This is a characteristic of Hinduism and certain schools of Buddhism. The result of this pantheist approach is that the immanence of God is stressed and the idea of transcendence is negated.

Platonic thought, with its emphasis on the *idea* as the only reality, has a tendency toward pantheism. It is a monistic system within which evil becomes no more than the other face of good and is viewed as illusory. Spinoza enunciated this philosophy in the West in the 18th century, affirming that God is not only the cause of the world but is also to be identified with the world.¹²⁰ Idealistic thought has affinities with pantheism, as has transcendentalism, the New England 19th-century form of German idealism.¹²¹

Although *immanentism* is not strictly pantheistic (it could allow for the transcendence of God), the stress is on the subjective existence of God in the world. Pantheism takes away the distinctiveness of God, the “otherness” that has been characteristic of the understanding of God in the scriptural religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

The Islamic concept of an amalgamated reality is that an integrated existence issues from the singular will of the Creator and functions according to His commodious, expansive and inclusive regulation. Existence has a uniformity of development and proportionality as it moves in conformity to Allah (ﷻ), **“Nay, but His is all that is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly obey His will” (2:116).**

In this order of things, when everything in the heavens and on earth is God’s, there is no necessity to conceptualize a divine offspring — a “son of God.” Everyone and everything is equally God’s impartial creation. The method of that creation is described by **“The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth; and when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it ‘Be’ — and it is” (2:117).** But the human mind asks, “How does this will of God take place?” And the answer is that it takes place in a capacity beyond the mortal’s ability to comprehend because it is done in the realm of divinity and not in the realm of mortality. It is a waste of effort to try to contrive answers about how affairs are initiated in the sphere of the trans-mortal.

The Qur’an ends this brief reference to and correction of the groundless idea that God has a begotten son, and follows it by addressing another baseless idea that is repeated by crude and ignorant people. This idea in a sense also corresponds to the idea of a breeding or begetting God,

And [only] those who are devoid of knowledge say, “Why does God not speak unto us, nor is a [miraculous] sign shown to us?” Even thus, like unto what they say, spoke those who lived before their time (2:118).

These words express the attitude of all those who reach a mental cul-de-sac. When the mind is short-circuited, when the intuitive urge to be familiar with God is so strong but knows not where else to look, when the soul is emptied of meaning and purpose, when the intellect longs for knowledge of the ultimate reality and truth but has none, when man decides to go it alone and deny or bury the concept of God, and finds himself as confused and as bewildered as ever, he overreaches his sensory and intellectual capacities and is reduced to saying desperately, **“If only God would talk to us or if only a miracle would come to us!”**

Yahūd had uttered such words even though they had scripture to ponder and probe. People of shallow science or superficial scholarship would come up to the Prophet (ﷺ) and to the Prophets (ﷺ) before him, and ask to see or to hear God, or to have some physical miracles performed in front of their eyes! The ancient and contemporary people who want quick fixes, immediate fulfillment and short answers are all of one nature, one frame of mind and one deviation, **“Their hearts are all alike.”** They all want and desire to have God respond to their urges on their schedule. Numerous reports of miracles appear in ancient sources — biblical (Jewish and Christian) as well as non-Israeli, Greek and Roman. Even the content of the reports is frequently the same: healing the sick, restoring the dead to life, movements of heavenly bodies in conjunction with important earthly events. The question in this mind-set is not “Do miracles happen?” but “What do they signify?”

The ancients were not troubled by the notion that a miracle was a violation of the laws of nature. Rather, they understood that a miracle was a special manifestation of divine power or purpose. The chronic problem with producing miracles was that their effects were short-lived and the same people would soon return to the Prophets (ﷺ) and ask for new miracles. This was becoming an addictive cycle in the history of Prophets (ﷺ). Miracles eventually lost or could not sustain their luster. So the Muhammadi era proclaimed an end to miracles. These were to be replaced by *āyāt*: the detection of God’s will in the acts of man through processes of patience, tribulations, hard times and wars. **“We have made all the**

āyāt manifest unto people who are endowed with profound confidence” (2:118).

A commitment to God through a life of tests and trials will produce God’s intervention into man’s life at one time or another — not when man’s worldly urges demand it but when man’s post-worldly redemption requires it. Such are God’s men on earth. Their bodies endure the pains and drains of the injustices of life while their minds and souls are wedded to the promises of justice in the true life to come. This lifelong conviction is made possible by the security that comes from a purposeful and meaningful certainty that men of God have.

Christian and Yahūdī Supremism versus Allah’s (ﷻ) Power

After deconstructing the Yahūdī sociopathic strategies, thus invalidating their nonsensical claims, the Qur’anic address turns to guide the Prophet (ﷺ) on what he should do next. These instructions demonstrate the nature of the showdown between the Prophet (ﷺ) on the one hand, and the Yahūdī and imperial “Christian” political agendas on the other. These informative āyāt show that the end of this discord comes only at a price that the Prophet (ﷺ) could not and would not pay. It is a price that, if paid, would antagonize Allah (ﷻ) — something the Prophet (ﷺ) would never do, of course.

- Verily, We have sent you [O Prophet] with the truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner; and you shall not be held accountable for those who are destined for the blazing fire.
- For never will the Yahūd be pleased with you, nor yet the Christians, unless you follow in their own worldview. Say, “Behold, Allah’s guidance is the only true guidance.” And, indeed, if you should follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto you, you would have none to protect you from Allah, and none to bring you succor.
- Those unto whom We have vouchsafed the divine writ [and who] follow it as it ought to be followed — it is they who [truly] are committed to it; whereas all who choose to deny its truth — it is they, they who are the losers!

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ
 ﴿١١٩﴾ وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَىٰ
 اللَّهُ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنْ أَتَبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ
 مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وِليٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ
 تِلَاوَتِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ ۗ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾
 يَبْنَئِ أَسْرَعِيلَ أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى
 الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا
 عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

- O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favored you above all other people;
- And raise your guard to [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall ransom be accepted from any of them, nor shall intercession be of any use to them, and none shall be succored (al-Baqarah:119–123).

“Verily, We have sent you [O Muhammad] with the truth.” This statement from Allah (ﷻ) should be enough to enable any Muslim to see through the misinformation and myth-information constantly circulating about the Islamic and heavenly trust. Muhammad (ﷺ) was the bearer of the truth. This is simply an actual and bona fide certainty. The Qur’an is saying that the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ) is a verified and indisputable fact. Its validity sur-

passes mathematical “truths.” The final message imparted to Muhammad (ﷺ) is consistent with the kind of reality that Yahūd and their political allies always want to fudge. Despite volleys of propaganda from all directions, Allah’s (ﷻ) dynamic words tell everyone that Muhammad (ﷺ) is honesty, integrity, and truthfulness. The original Arabic cadence of the *āyah* vibrates with confidence and confidence-building, **“As a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.”**

The Prophet (ﷺ) has to say it as it is: good news for all who recognize and receive God; and bad news for those who disallow or forget God. This, simply, is what gets Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ) — and Muslims who follow their example — into “trouble” with the dominant earthly power structure. Often, the soothing and calming information delivered by the Prophets (ﷺ) is accepted only by powerless people; correspondingly, most of the time the disturbing news carried by the Prophets (ﷺ) is contested and fought by powerful people.

“And you shall not be held accountable for those who are destined for the blazing fire.” Human nature, especially in sensitive and caring individuals, tends to suffer from a deep concern for those who have sealed their fate, in the process condemning themselves to the inferno in the afterlife. This heavenly message is one of care, compassion, kindness and love. It is very difficult for a considerate, benevolent and kindhearted individual, like the Prophet (ﷺ) and likewise all men of God, to see fellow men reject divine advice and heavenly help. But in real life that is exactly what happens; a Muslim cannot have his mission impeded or his morale shattered by individuals who choose Shayṭān over al-Raḥmān.

The Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims who follow in his footsteps are told that teaching this program from paradise (Islam) and explaining its meanings will incite confrontations with Yahūd and imperial “Christians.” These *Ahl al-Kitāb* (literally, People of the Book) will move heaven and earth to discredit Islam’s noble objectives. They will not rest until they have obliterated the ideological contents of this messianic message and still they will not lay down their arms. Psychologically, they will muster all possible negative emotions and throw every dehumanizing accusation at the Prophet

(ﷺ) and his companions, past and present. They will persist until Muslims give up the theory, principles, postulates, and doctrines of Islam. Not only do Muslims have to break with the ideological teachings and the conceptual tenets of Islam and all the certitude that comes with it, they would also have to subscribe to the Yahūdī and Christian ethnocentric, racist, class-oriented, and discriminatory interpretation of scripture! Muslims would have to concede to and condone the Yahūdī and Christian conceptual chaos to receive a seal of approval!

“[Zionist] Yahūd and [Imperial] Christians will never [ever] be satisfied with you until you enroll into their worldview.” The *āyah* is so true and so thorough. The political machineries within the Yahūdī and Christian establishments have shown a consistent dissatisfaction and discontent whenever Muslims follow their own program, derived from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The political culture in the Judeo-Christian West has nothing positive to say about Islamic self-determination. In our time, just as in times past, it routinely trashes the Islamic movement, Islamic parties, Islamic states and Islamic governments.

The military expeditions beginning in 1095CE, and lasting several centuries, whereby imperial Christians sought to occupy the Holy Land, are a prime historical example of this belligerent appetite that kills and maims. The first Crusade (1095–1099) was the only “successful” one in terms of its stated goals. In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a military enterprise to “free” the Holy Sepulcher¹²² from the “Turks,” who had taken it from the “Arabs” and whose growing power was threatening the Byzantine empire. He promised *plenary indulgence* (meaning, the remission of sin) to all who lost their lives in the crusades.

Thus the ideal of the Crusades combined earlier notions of just war, the value of pilgrimage to holy places and the need to do penance for sins. The first wave of Crusaders — who received this name because of the cross they wore on their clothing — was a disorganized mob under the leadership of Peter the Hermit. On their way to Constantinople they massacred Jews along with Muslims, ravaged lands, and destroyed crops. Unanticipated factors such as

disease, lack of preparation for the long journey, and resistance from their would-be victims caused their initially large numbers to dwindle down to a few. Their ragged remnants were joined at Constantinople with the better-organized military units under the leadership of a papal legate. One historian writes,

The Franj [Crusaders] kept their word, Ibn al-Athir notes conscientiously, and let [the Egyptians] depart by night for the port of Ascalon, where they camped... The population of the holy city [Jerusalem] were put to the sword, and the Franj spent a week massacring Muslims. They killed more than seventy thousand people in al-Aqsa mosque... the Jews had gathered in their synagogue and the Franj burned them alive. They also destroyed the monuments of saints and the tombs of Abraham.

Among the monuments sacked by the invaders was the mosque of ‘Umar, erected to the memory of the second successor of the Prophet, the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who had taken Jerusalem in February 638CE. The Arabs would later frequently invoke this event to highlight the difference between their conduct and that of the Franj. ‘Umar had entered Jerusalem astride his famous white camel, and the Greek patriarch of the holy city came forward to meet him. The caliph first assured him that the lives and property of the city’s inhabitants would be respected and then asked the patriarch to take him to visit the Christian Holy Church of Qiyama, the Holy Sepulcher, and ‘Umar asked his host if he could unroll his prayer mat. The patriarch invited ‘Umar to do so right where he stood but the caliph answered, “If I do, the Muslims will want to appropriate this site saying, ‘‘Umar prayed here.’” Then, carrying his prayer mat, he went and knelt outside. He was right, for it was on that very spot that the mosque that bore his name was constructed. The Frankish commanders, alas, lacked ‘Umar’s magnanimity. They celebrated their triumph with an

orgy of killing and then savagely ravaged the city they claimed to venerate.

Not even their [own] coreligionists were spared. One of the first measures taken by the Franj was to expel from the Church of Holy Sepulcher all the priests of the Oriental rites — Greeks, Georgians, Armenians, Copts, and Syrians — who used to officiate jointly, in accordance with old tradition respected by all previous conquerors. Dumbfounded by this degree of fanaticism, the dignitaries of the Oriental Christian communities decided to resist. They refused to tell the occupiers where they had hidden the True Cross, on which [they believed that] Christ died. In the minds of these men, religious devotion to the relic was compounded by patriotic pride. Indeed, were they not fellow citizens of the Nazarene? But the invaders were not impressed. They arrested the priests who had been entrusted with the custody of the Cross and tortured them to make them reveal the secret. Thus did the Franj manage to forcibly deprive the Christians of the holy city wherein lay their most precious relics.¹²³

These European Christians of almost a thousand years ago, and the European Zionists of today, are demonstrating yet again the truth of every word in the Qur'an. Their hatred of Islam was so intense that they killed fellow Christians whose only "crime" was to live within the Islamic geo-political and cultural space. Only recently (1992–1995CE), they turned their weapons of hatred against Muslims in the Balkans, fearing that these Balkanized Muslims would become a springboard for Islam in Europe! Now, by launching the "war on terror" in 2001CE, they have inaugurated new killing fields in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the ostensible objective of preventing "terrorist" Muslims from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction.¹²⁴ Massacring hundreds of thousands of Muslims at the height of their "civilization," and turning millions of other Muslims into refugees causes them no loss of sleep. This is the psychopathic reality of Judeo-Christian politics.

Verily, We have sent you [O Prophet] with the truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner; and you shall not be held accountable for those who are destined for the blazing fire. For never will the Yahūd be pleased with you, nor yet the Christians, unless you follow in their own worldview. Say, “Behold, Allah’s guidance is the only true guidance.” And, indeed, if you should follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto you, [then] you would have none to protect yourself from Allah, and none to bring you succor. Those unto whom We have vouchsafed the divine writ [and who] follow it as it ought to be followed — it is they who [truly] are committed to it; whereas all who choose to deny its truth — it is they, they who are the losers! (2:119–121).

For the Judeo-Christian world, Islam is their main problem. These die-hard officials, who are very familiar with Islam through their diplomatic contacts and intelligence operatives, need no proof of the validity of the Qur’an. They need no convincing that Islam is the genuine truth. Muslims can be as friendly as humanly possible and offer them the best, most traditional hospitality; however, none of it will satisfy these Israelis and their imperial allies. The only thing that will please them is for Muslims to break from Islam and join the capitalist creed, the Christian crusade, and the Zionist enterprise. For Muslims to be accepted and acceptable in the Zionist and imperial worldview, they should relinquish their God-given Gospel of truth and turn their backs on Allah (ﷻ)!

This is the imperial Christian complex and the envious Yahūdī obsession when it comes to struggling Muslims who are trying to uphold their convictions and commitments. It never fails. The Judeo-Christian hierarchy’s repeated and on-going massacres of Muslims are preemptive strikes against a people that are showing increasing potential for a resurgence of their ideological character. They hate Muslims because Islam challenges all they have worked for over centuries and this is what they want destroyed and forgotten by any and all possible means.

Certainly, Zionist Yahūd and imperialist Christians have serious differences. The divisions between different sects of imperialist Christians are well known, and even Zionist Yahūd are not a monolithic community. But when there is the slightest possibility of a Muslim community exercising Islamic self-determination and establishing an Islamic polity or government anywhere in the world, these Zionists and imperialists close ranks, bury their hatchets and turn their guns against the unfortunate Muslims!

Make no mistake, this is a war. How can it be anything else when Muslims are routinely butchered by imperial and Zionist forces, or their proxies, all over the world? But of course these two foes of Islam and Muslims have ample experience in disguising their war, camouflaging their battles and covering-up their steps. They are such experts at misrepresenting the truth and dissembling their real motives that they fool many Muslims despite the Qur'an's numerous and emphatic warnings on this very point. Their historical experience has shown them that they cannot win when they wage a direct, ideological and militaristic war against Islam. This is a lesson they have learned through numerous ancient and more recent crusades. So now they change the names and titles, the designations and descriptions for the battles they are fighting. Now they will never come out and candidly state they are at war with ideological and political Islam.

They are afraid that by openly admitting it, they may invite an unfavorable public opinion or, at the very least, they may consolidate an indignant Muslim public opinion. Instead they have developed fancy and misleading titles for labeling and libeling the Muslims in order to justify murdering and massacring them. They say that a certain government has "weapons of mass destruction;" this becomes a convenient pretext to kill the Muslim population of that particular country. They say that another government is developing "nuclear arms capabilities;" this then becomes an excuse to wage war against the Muslim population of that country. They will say that a government is a supporter of "terrorism" in order to legitimize a war planned against the Muslim population of that country.

Even if these accusations are taken at face value, Muslims are hardly the only people in the world to possess "weapons of mass

destruction” and “nuclear weapons,” or to support “terrorism” (bear in mind that in the Muslim case, what the West calls “terrorism” is really jihad). But the others, who possess weapons of mass destruction and sponsor acts of state terrorism, are part of the West or in its satellite orbit, and hence immune from Western censure on such matters. Meanwhile, the Muslim governments are characterized as “rogue states” and international outlaws against whom any kind of human indignity under the sun is permissible.

But the fact is that a war on another level is being waged against dedicated Muslims who commit their service to Allah (ﷻ), Islam and the oppressed of the world. This is not just a war of missiles dropping weapons of mass destruction on helpless and defenseless Muslim civilians, but a psychological war of words as well — a propaganda war. And the essence of this propaganda is that the West has nothing against Islam; in fact they respect it. The West’s targets are only those Muslims who resort to armed struggle, even though the West claims every license to do the same! Serious dedication to Allah (ﷻ) and His covenant is viewed as a threat by the West. This is just as it should be. All oppressors, all exploiters, and thereby all enemies of Islam should feel endangered with covenant-bearing Muslims on the horizon.

Muslims must wake up! The Qur’an is giving the news that will never be heard from CNN, the BBC, or any other mouthpiece of those who have planned the extermination of God’s will on earth.¹²⁵ This is not a war about petroleum, other natural resources, or sources of water, even though these are important factors. It is a war that goes back to when such issues could not be used to conceal their real intentions and purposes. It is a war that harks back to the Crusades, the Inquisitions, al-Yarmūk, Ḥiṭṭīn and their Mediterranean piracies.¹²⁶ There are, regrettably, some Muslims who have bought into the Western propaganda completely and truly believe the Muslims are treated in accordance with national interest priorities! These types can only blame themselves for choosing to disregard Allah’s (ﷻ) warning to His Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslim Ummah, **“And never will Yahūd or Christians be pleased with you until you join their worldview.”**

This is the exchange or bargain that such Muslims appear willing to accept: abandon Islam and adopt instead the perspective of the West, and you shall gain admittance into the West's club of nations, and some token "equality" within the Western order. So what is the response to this stiffened Western attitude? **"Say, 'Behold, Allah's guidance is the only true guidance.'"**

In our world of moral, ethical and ideological bankruptcy, who can stand up and say Allah's (ﷻ) guidance is the only true guidance? Zionism has nothing to offer the world except racism and discrimination; and capitalism has nothing to offer except poverty and greed. It is only Allah's (ﷻ) prescription that has everything to offer a suffering and declining world. This is the time that Muslims must stand up and make it clear that Allah's (ﷻ) guidance is the only true guidance while man's political theories and postulates have caused untold misery and tragedy. This is not an issue of negotiations and half-solutions. It is the morality of the Islamic ideology that mankind needs and it is the ideology of the Islamic morality that is lacking in the affairs of man. Only the students and scholars of the Qur'an who owe their hearts to Allah (ﷻ) are capable of realizing this redeeming fact. **"And, indeed, if you should follow their [political] desires after all the knowledge that has come to you, you will have none besides Allah as your superior or supporter."**

Remember, these words are addressed to the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. Allah (ﷻ) would not have helped him if he would have preferred the Judeo-Christian interest to the God-given task from on high. Allah (ﷻ) chose to speak so candidly to His most beloved one; think what that should mean to us. Yet these *āyāt* are explained away by today's "Muslims" who choose to fall under the protection of the United States, the United Nations, NATO, or other forces that have Muslim blood on their hands. **"Those to whom We have revealed the divine writ [and who] follow it as it ought to be followed — it is they who [truly] are committed to it; whereas all who choose to deny its truth — it is they, they who are the losers!"**

The communist parties have all collapsed. The political parties in the non-communist sphere are showing symptoms of failure and

disarray. These politicians can no longer outrun their lies, tricks and deceit. They have sought for many years to smother the ideological and political reality of Islam and now in their own backyards, their own ideologies and political parties are crumbling and collapsing. They have worked endlessly to subject the Muslims to political uncertainty and instability, in order to see Islam crash; and now it is they, after persistently denying its truth, who are the losers.

After this authoritative and explicit address to those Muslims who have been carried away by their concern for practical consequences in a Yahūdī-controlled world, the Qur'an addresses Banū Isrā'īl directly. After all of their deviant opposition to Allah (ﷻ) and their persistent persecution of His Prophets (ﷺ), these historical Israeli figures are still not excluded from Allah's (ﷻ) mercy. The Qur'an turns to the Children of Israel, as if to say, "This is your final chance, come on board before it is too late; it is Allah's (ﷻ) covenant and the invitation is open, do not be foolish and exclude yourselves from Allah's (ﷻ) offer. You upheld, in your own way, this trust before, do not fail to do so now." The Qur'an, as before, addresses them by their preferred title, Children of Israel,

O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favored you above all other people; and beware of [the coming of] the Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall ransom be accepted from any of them, nor shall intercession be of any use to them, and none shall be supported (2:122–123).

These *āyāt* establish the fact of a lonely culpability and accountability. Although *āyah* 122 begins in the plural, "O Children of Israel...", the tribal mentality that has taken over the Israeli mind-set in this world is of no value when each and every person will be held individually responsible for all worldly decisions and actions. With all the blessings Allah (ﷻ) graced upon the Israeli clan, and with all the status granted to Banū Isrā'īl in the material world, the fact of the matter is that each soul shall stand

and face its Maker *alone* on Judgement Day, **“...when no human spirit may reduce the load of another.”**

So “Yahūdī solidarity,” which works for whatever Machiavellian reason in world politics and international affairs, will count for nothing when an Israeli soul stands before the Almighty. There will be no access to the “country-club” network back on earth, or the “connections” that a person falls back on when things get rough. **“Nor shall ransom be accepted from any of them...”** When things went wrong in the world, there was always the financial clout that was able to buy the best lawyers or even subvert the system itself to get out of a legal or criminal mess. But there will be no Yahūdī lawyers, Yahūdī court or Yahūdī legal system to acquit the Israelis from their one-on-one encounter with Allah (ﷻ). **“And none of you shall be supported, succored, or sustained.”**

“Nor shall intercession be of any use to them.” Mediation and intervention will not work there. On that Day, the judge will be Allah (ﷻ) and the time will be for pure and final justice. One will stand alone and his conscience will be his only defense.

As reported earlier in this *sūrah*, people of scripture tend to deviate from the normal and natural relationship with Allah (ﷻ). This drift turns into a bias against Allah (ﷻ); and its most infamous example is Banū Isrā’īl. The *āyāt* above delivered pertinent information about this attitude. At its core is the lack of power prevalent in Israeli history and compensation for that by the control of economies and resources. In truth, however, such control did give the Israelis power, which is what they sought, even if they do not admit it.

Their numbers have always been very limited as they have not opened up their faith and community to gentiles by conversion. This becomes problematic: you want power but you do not have the required numbers for gaining and then sustaining it. The other option is to gain power by means of harnessing the forces of the market and the sources of nature. And if there is a moral objection or a prophetic instruction that stands in the way of this economic manipulation, the Israeli priority is and has always been money over morals and profit over prophet. From the time of Mūsá (ﷺ) to

the time of Muhammad (ﷺ), such deviation mostly came from Yahūd; much less has been reported in this regard about practicing Christians. There may well be other peoples who find common cause with Yahūd in expelling, from the active thoughts of man, the notion of a God with power on earth. Because their definition of God is erroneous and consumingly false, all such *mushriks* will always fight against Muslims.

Who Are the Inheritors of the Ibrāhīmi Commitment?

The next segment of this *sūrah* (*āyāt* 2:124–141) makes a historical leap back to the time of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ؑ). There are many things to ponder and learn from Ibrāhīm’s (ؑ) life, but the particular element highlighted in these *āyāt* fits into this part of the Qur’anic discourse. It demonstrates a point that became one of the contentious issues between Yahūd and the committed Muslims in Madinah.

- **And [remember this]: when his Sustainer tried Abraham by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them, He said, “Behold, I shall make you a leader of men.” [Abraham] asked, “And [will You make leaders of] my offspring as well?” [Allah] answered, “My covenant does not embrace the offenders.”**
- **And lo! We designated the Sacred House a retreat for people and a sanctuary; take, then, Ibrāhīm’s seat of status as your shrine. And thus did We entrust Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘il to purify My Sacred House for the people who will walk around it, [its] devotees, and those who genuflect and prostrate.**
- **And, lo, Ibrāhīm prayed, “O my Sustainer! Make this a land secure, and grant its people fruitful sustenance — such of them who are committed to Allah and the Last Day.” [Allah] answered, “And whoever shall deny the truth [of My power], him I will let enjoy himself for a short while — but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: and how vile a journey’s end!”**

وَإِذْ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ
 وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً
 لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنَا وَانْتَحَذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلِّينَ وَعَهْدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
 وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ
 ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ
 مَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ
 إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ
 وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا
 مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا
 إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٣٨﴾ رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا
 عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
 الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَرْغَبُ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ
 وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ إِذْ قَالَ
 لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ
 بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ

مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ
 لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾
 تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا
 كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ
 إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا
 أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ
 مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ
 اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ نُولُوا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ
 السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٨﴾ صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً
 وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قُلْ أَتَحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ
 وَلَنَّا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ كَانُوا
 هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ

شَهْدَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ تِلْكَ
 أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا
 يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

- And when Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘il were raising the foundations of the Sacred House, [they prayed,] “O our Sustainer! Accept You this from us; for, verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing!
- “O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto You, and make of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto You, and show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance; for, verily, You alone are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace!
- “O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle, who shall convey unto them Your messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom, and cause them to grow in purity; for, verily, You alone are Almighty, Truly Wise!”
- And who, unless he be weak of mind, would want to abandon Ibrāhīm’s doctrinal worldview, seeing that We have indeed raised him high in this world and that, verily, in the life to come he shall be among the righteous?
- As his Sustainer said to him, “Yield to Me!” He [Ibrāhīm] answered, “I have yielded [to You], the Sustainer of all the worlds.”
- And this very thing did Ibrāhīm bequeath unto his children, and [so did] Jacob, “O my children! Behold, Allah has given this *dīn* to you; so do not allow death to overtake you unless you have yielded to Him.”
- Or were you [the Children of Israel] witnesses when Jacob was attended by death as he said to his descendants, “To

whom will you conform after me?” They said, “We will conform to your God, the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ismā‘īl and Isaac, the One God to whom we will yield.

- Now that social order has passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned; and you will not be judged on the strength [or weakness] of what they did.
- And they say, “Be Jews — or, Christians — and you shall be guided.” Say, “No, but [ours is] the worldview of Abraham, who was independent of falsehood, and was not of those who default [on Allah’s authority].”
- Say, “We are committed to Allah, and to that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ismā‘īl and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] Prophets by their Sustainer; we do not discriminate between any of them. And it is unto Him that we resign ourselves.”
- And if [others] commit themselves to a likeness of your commitment, they will indeed find themselves on the right path; and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and Allah will protect you from them: for He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
- [Say, “Our life takes its] hue from Allah! And who could give a better hue [to life] than Allah, if we but truly conform to Him?”
- Say [to the Jews and the Christians], “Do you argue with us about Allah? But He is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer — and unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto you your deeds; and it is unto Him alone that we devote ourselves.
- “Do you claim that Abraham and Ismā‘īl and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants were ‘Jews’ or ‘Christians?’” Say, “Do you know more than Allah does? And who could be

more wicked than he who suppresses a testimony given to him by Allah? Yet Allah is not unmindful of what you do”

- That was an ummah that predated [yours]. It shall have what it derived [of its worldly proceeds], as you will have what you derived [of your worldly proceeds]; and you will not be held accountable for what they were doing (al-Baqarah:124–141).

The Ahl al-Kitāb (Jews and Christians) trace their affinity to Abraham (ﷺ) through the lineage of his son Isaac (in Arabic, Ishāq – ﷺ). They feel this lineage is so special that it has become something to brag about. They draw on historical material to point out God’s promise of prosperity and popularity to Abraham (ﷺ) and his son; then they automatically extend it to include themselves in this promise. They consider their blood-relationship to Abraham (ﷺ), meaning their Semitic status, as a prequalifier that elevates them above the rest of mankind. This is especially true of the Yahūdī faction of Ahl al-Kitāb. From this Abrahamic affiliation they consider themselves to have a monopoly on issues of religion, spirituality and divinity. The Yahūd and Christians leave no doubt in anyone’s mind about their authority in a scriptural syndicate. By extension they make clear their sole claim to an exclusivist paradise.

Likewise, the Quraysh trace their origin to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) through his son Ishmael (in Arabic, Ismā‘īl – ﷺ). The Quraysh also take pride in their descent from Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). It is because of this affiliation that the Quraysh were in charge of the Inviolable House of Worship in Makkah. They also had the responsibility of enhancing and promoting the precincts of the Ka‘bah. From this affiliation with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), the Quraysh exerted a form of religious authority over other Arabians. The Quraysh had social prestige, economic weight and political stature over other Arabian tribes and clans. This resembles the position of the Saudi clan in our time and age, who claim the “pomp and pride” of the Quraysh, with all the religious and political clout that goes with it.

Earlier, Muslims were reminded of Yahūdī and Christian claims, restricting paradise to their own, **“And they say that none**

will enter paradise unless he is a Yahūdī or a Christian” (2:111). Of course, they would try to convert Muslims into becoming Christians or, to a much lesser extent, Jews. They claim that this is the only way for Muslims to be guided, **“And they said, ‘Be Yahūd or Christians and you will be guided.’” (2:120).**

This Yahūdī-Christian desire to detach the Abrahamic from the Islamic is not a passive one. They will go as far as emptying the *masjids* of their Islamic content, voiding the *minbars* (pulpits) of their Islamic character and separating Makkah and the Hajj from their Islamic *qiblah*. If they can destroy the message of the *masjid* that is good; if they can destroy the *masjid* itself, that is even better!

Allah (ﷻ) starts *āyāt* 124–141 with the account of Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl and Ishāq (ﷺ), and then follow this with words concerning al-Bayt al-Ḥarām (the Inviolable House), its construction, maintenance and rites. The true Abrahamic history is placed here in order to clarify the facts obfuscated by the imputations of Yahūd, the Christians, and the Arabian *mushriks* who all draw legitimacy from their Abrahamic genealogy. That is followed by the heavenly declaration of an ideological *qiblah* suitable for the covenant-bearing Muslims. In this sequence of *āyāt* comes the final word about Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) “religion,” the faith of unadulterated monotheism. This clarification of the message of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) exposes the delinquent and errant creeds of both the Yahūd and Christians, along with the Arabian *mushriks*. And at the same time, it invigorates the last Scripture and its Islamic community of believers.

This fact, then, is firmly and forever established: Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq and Ya‘qūb (ﷺ), whom the Israelis refer to as *Israel* and with whom they make their genetic and racist connection, are Muslim Prophets (ﷺ), and the Muslims are their followers. The fact is bolstered with incontrovertible evidence: Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* is one *dīn*; all Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ) expressed what is in essence one belief-system, one concept of Allah (ﷻ), and one divine message to man. Never did God mean His word of revelation and His grace to be the monopoly of a single race, people or nation. The Qur’an makes it clear that true belief and faith are the function of a committed heart and mind, and not the heritage or

inheritance of a clan or tribe. No relationship to revelation and scripture is ever a relationship of blood and race, but rather a relationship of doctrinal commitment and active involvement. Whoever brings the words of Allah (ﷻ) into life, moulds them into behavior, and presents them free of ego is the one who has a relationship with God. And if those of “royal blood” and “chosen race” fail to do this, they have no relationship with God. Scripture and divine disclosure are Allah’s (ﷻ) alone, and Allah (ﷻ) has no blood kinship with His subjects and servants.

In this discourse Allah (ﷻ) makes it absolutely clear that the heirs of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) are not his kinsmen; they are the men of his faith. Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) successors are not those who claim his shape and body, they are those who claim his heart and mind. Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) inheritors are not the racist and arrogant Yahūd and Christians, they are the faithful, moral and spiritual Muslims. Thus it is announced in this historical narration that Islam (yielding to Allah’s (ﷻ) discretion and resolve) has been Allah’s (ﷻ) word and message to man from the first prophet to the last. This was the firm belief and faith of Ibrāhīm, Ismā’il, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb, and all the biblical Prophets including Moses and Jesus (ﷺ). This firm belief and faith finally became the responsibility of the committed and devout Muslims, who in this sense have become the seed of Abraham (ﷺ). Whoever upholds this historical legacy of faith and duty is the heir and scion of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and the Ibrāhīmi legacy. Whoever chooses to abandon or distort this ideological and spiritual bond does so at the expense of his own soul, safety and salvation.

These few *āyāt* shatter all the Yahūdī and Christian claims based on their blood-relationship to Abraham (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) does not elevate people because of their Abrahamic pedigree! You do not become God’s chosen people because of an ethnic connection to Abraham (ﷺ). All people who claim some special status because of race and ethnicity traced to Abraham (ﷺ) are bypassing the only relevant criterion of this relationship: the inward, temperate and consuming attachment to the ideals and God-conscious character of the patriarch Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Thus, ruined is the Qurayshī claim of

control over the Holy House in Makkah, the House that Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) originally built together. Similarly crushed is the Yahūdī claim of their *qiblah* as the only *qiblah*, when Makkah and the Sanctified House of Allah (ﷻ) were built by Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) to be the *qiblah* of all humanity. The Ka‘bah is the Muslims’ *qiblah*, just as it was Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ).

And [remember this]: when his Sustainer tried Ibrāhīm by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them, He said, “Behold, I shall make you a leader of men.” [Ibrāhīm] asked, “And [will You make leaders of] my offspring as well?” [Allah] answered, “My covenant does not embrace the offenders” (2:124).

In another *āyah*, Allah (ﷻ) confirms Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) conscientious discharge of divinely-assigned tasks, **“And of Ibrāhīm, who to his trust was true...” (53:37)**. There can be no doubt that Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) gained a very high status of piety and was honored with these scriptural words of praise. He earned his rank and for that Allah (ﷻ) anointed him a leader (imam) in his own right, **“[He] said, ‘Behold, I shall make you a leader of men.’”** Thus, Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was ordained by Allah (ﷻ) to become the mentor and master of peoples. He looked for their well-being and they trusted in his command; he had a position of authority in their affairs. Despite the unique status conferred on him by Allah (ﷻ) and his close proximity to Him, Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was nonetheless stirred by innate human nature: a desire to have this status continue through his progeny and offspring. This is an indomitable tendency in human nature. Who does not want his children to continue from where he left off; who does not want the privileges gained in one’s own time to be passed on to the next generation; and who can resist the urge to preserve the good through the most trusted individuals, one’s own family and children?

Our urge for procreation and survival are only matched by our desire for the well-being and inheritance of our families and children. However idealistic an ideology may be, there is no denial that

this force in nature is not one that can be cancelled by the stroke of a pen or by passing legislation. It is in fulfillment of this natural flow from parents to children that the heavenly laws of inheritance are established, by which the wealth and possessions of parents are distributed equitably to their children. The natural and the legal cooperate to energize the cohesion of family. Any legal system that promulgates laws contrary to this God-given nature will fail sooner or later because it goes against the innermost feelings in man.

Laws should never be made to clash with human nature. This is why man needs a source of guidance and a reliable frame of reference when he enacts regulations of a social or societal impact. And who knows more about human nature and natural human yearnings than He who created human beings and life in general? The Creator presents man with moral attention and legal care, free of any interest, selfishness or bias. That is why this twin combination of morality and legality emanating from Allah (ﷻ) is the only guarantee of a balanced and stable life.

“He [Ibrāhīm] said, ‘And from my descendants?’” The answer to Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) question and desire, to his fatherly yearnings and family responsibilities, came from the Creator of human desires and yearnings, the Maker of humans and life, and the Originator of existence and reality. The answer to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) at the early stage of human development was to ultimately define the root difference between the Muslims and Yahūd, between the Arabs and Israelis, and between the “cultural” Semites and “genetic” Semites. Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), in layman’s language, wanted desperately for his children and their children to be leaders and pioneers. But there is a condition for the acquisition of such leadership. It belongs to those who earn it through hard work and a corresponding conscience of poignancy and sensitivity. Leadership is a quality that develops out of a divine commitment that unceasingly generates consecrated labor on earth. Leadership can be traced to the pure motivations of man, his heightened consciousness of Allah (ﷻ), and his unwavering conviction and determination to do Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth. This divinely-sanctioned leadership of man on earth may be passed from father to son if the son devel-

ops similar qualities; but such leadership can never be an automatic inheritance through a bloodline or family pedigree.

When Allah (ﷻ) dwells in the hearts of men, when Allah (ﷻ) settles in the ideas and initiatives of humans, when Allah (ﷻ) occupies the soul of parents, and when He commands the allegiance of persons and parties by the relationship of *din* and doctrine, then flesh and blood are no longer the primary connection; they are overridden by common faith and fidelity. Superimposing genes and blood, race and ethnicity, colour and national origin or any other sort of birthright onto this God-given standard of fraternity becomes a matter of religious racism. Subsuming religion to the class divisiveness of racism clashes with the salient relationship of conviction and commitment to Allah (ﷻ); **“He [Allah] said, ‘My covenant shall not include the offenders.’”**

Offenses that exclude people from positions of leadership are of many types. A person may offend his own self by conceptualizing God in a position inferior to His absolute and unrivaled status of authority and divinity. A person may offend others by the cruel and violent exercise of power: aggression, oppression and injustice. In both cases there is an abuse of power; in the first case a person abuses his power of mind to confuse the issue of the Almighty and Omnipotent God; in the second case he abuses the Source of his power by obscuring the issue of the Just and Fair God of existence. A heavenly-appointed, designated or approved leader will have none of these weaknesses.

On the other hand, the leadership that includes people in its fold is of many ranks: there is the leadership of Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ), there is the leadership of succession to Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ), and there is the leadership of scholars or ‘alims. Whatever the rank of a leader, true leadership is the balanced convergence of Allah’s (ﷻ) moral and legal authority with the human condition of the times. When human morality, guided by Allah (ﷻ), matures enough to practice its convictions, and when community legal institutions, guided by Allah (ﷻ), are developed for social order, then such a combination produces a culture of divinely inspired institutional leadership. The chief act of such a culture is to

continuously nurture *muttaqīs* who are qualified to lead and command according to and in harmony with Allah's (ﷻ) principles. Both the morality of humanity and the legal and institutional structures of social living are essential for human societal survival. Morality cannot expand without legal protection, and legality cannot be asserted without moral assurance. When ethics and laws are together operating in harmonious partnership, then and only then will there be justice. Injustice is the clash of morals and laws. Nobody who has an inconsistency between his official beliefs and his personal standards is qualified for divinely-legitimate leadership.

As the Qur'an is meant to be understood in the time frame of each reader, we in our time-frame in light of the above qualifications for leadership, should try to understand today's world through Qur'anic meanings and elucidations. For example, the United States of America is incessantly described as the global leader; it is the only "superpower" on earth. However, through an understanding of Allah's (ﷻ) words in the Qur'an, it is clear that the United States cannot be qualified as a leader by these high standards. Anyone around at the time (1992–2000CE) would remember when the personal character of then President of the United States, Bill Clinton, was brought into question.¹²⁷ His amoral and lecherous character was duly established even before he was elected president; and this kind of activity is not uncommon in many high and influential positions in the Western world. But because personal moral conscience has been all but jettisoned from the public space, the persistent argument posed by anti-Clinton partisans (the Republicans) was about how his philandering compromised national security. On the same hand, pro-Clinton partisans (the Democrats) argued whether the moral character of the president should be of any concern to US citizens as long as he fulfills his executive duties.

Although almost no one disputed the fact that he was an X-rated president, they insisted on drawing a line between his moral compartment and his professional conduct. In other words, the separation of church from state had become complete: conscience was separated from conduct. No one came out and said it for what it was: the only "superpower" in the world had an adulterous lecher as

its chief executive and supreme leader; and that this was a reflection on the whole society, not just him.

Another aspect of this situation was that this amoral and lecherous leader was fully supported by the Israelis. How could this womanizer be a leader unless leadership is defined by Satan? And how then could the Israelis, who claim they are the seed of Abraham (ﷺ), the “chosen people,” support and uphold this president? How could churches and synagogues — and even some *masjids* — join the bandwagon of such overwhelming corruption, and try to legitimize the power of such people? All around, there are such morally-empty “men of God” that they are unable to confront and condemn such profound deviation in the highest office of the land.

Moreover, if the Zionist Israeli establishment occupying Palestine is further scrutinized, it will reveal “Clintonites” running all over the Holy Land, from Hebron to Haifa, from Jerusalem to Jericho, and from Sinai to Safad. A recent election pitted a furniture-selling philanderer against a bar-bouncing Russian gangster for the position of president, then occupied by a convicted rapist.¹²⁸ Their “entertainment” industry, for example, is now represented at “cultural” events around the world by a Yemeni-Yahūdi transsexual.¹²⁹ The mess created by Israeli theories of genetic piety is seen not only in the perversions of their own bloodstream, but also in the streams of the innocent Palestinian and Muslim blood flowing in and beyond the Holy Land. Can an Israeli fornicate and fight, eat swine and swallow wine, pirate other people’s property and strangle the livelihoods of people simply because they are gentiles — and then sit back and claim to be of Abraham’s (ﷺ) chosen seed? This moral arrogance is the crux of the Arab-Israeli problem.

“He [Allah] said, ‘My covenant shall not include oppressors.’” God’s covenant is not with oppressors, offenders or evildoers. There is no combination of genes that will exempt these Israeli offenders from the wrath and punishment of a just God. Because of their moral ineptitude and associated legalistic cover-ups, Yahūd and Israeli Zionists are no longer covenant material. They have aggressed beyond limits, they have offended against every decent standard of conduct and they have institutionalized their political

community into a war of dogma against the ideological and religious heirs of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).

This is equally true of those today who say that they are Muslims, yet are guilty of the same crimes against Allah (ﷻ) and humanity. If Muslims behave like Israelis, they too will incur the same damnation. It is no secret that many of the rulers of the Arabian tribal nations of Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc., are no less adulterous and amoral, and no less racially arrogant than their Israeli counterparts. There are undoubtedly more Western, Russian, and Oriental mistresses and prostitutes in the Persian Gulf countries than in the Holy Land under the Israelis. The “night life” in Dubai and Manama is no less sinful than in Tel Aviv and Haifa. These “thousand-and-one-night” Arabians are offenders, oppressors and evildoers. They too are excluded from Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) covenant. Their genetic record, too, is of no value; in this the Israeli and Arabian officials have much in common.

And yet the Arabian offense has a unique edge to it: it is busy warring against those of its people who are trying to reestablish the Ibrāhīmi covenant. This, they call (or are instructed to call) a war against “Islamic fundamentalism.” The Israelis, on the other hand, have neither the hypocrisy nor the audacity to declare war on Yahūdī fundamentalism.

And lo! We designated the Sacred House a retreat for people and a sanctuary; take, then, Ibrāhīm’s seat of status as your shrine. And thus did We entrust Ibrāhīm and Ismā’il to purify My Sacred House for the people who will walk around it, [its] devotees, and those who genuflect and prostrate. And, lo, Ibrāhīm prayed, “O my Sustainer! Make this a land secure, and grant its people fruitful sustenance — such of them who are committed to Allah and the Last Day.” [Allah] answered, “And whoever shall deny the truth [of My power], him I will let enjoy himself for a short while — but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: and how vile a journey’s end!” (2:125–126)

The Holy Sanctuary (al-Bayt al-Ḥarām), before the Prophet's (ﷺ) triumphant return to Makkah in his last years, was in possession of the Quraysh. They terrorized and abused the Muslims who, being forced away from Makkah, had to find security elsewhere. Allah (ﷻ) wanted His Sacred House to be a haven for all people, a shelter and an asylum — a place where there is no fear or terror, a place where anyone would feel secure in his life and possessions. This retreat was meant to be an abode of peace, security and tranquillity, **“And recall We made the Sacred House a resort for people and [a place for their] security.”**

The Muslims were ordered by Allah (ﷻ) to preserve and maintain Prophet Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) *maqām* (place, seat) as a site for *ṣalāh*. This *maqām* includes all the Ḥaram area. Therefore it is only natural for the Sacred House to become the Muslims' *qiblah*. This Ibrāhīmi temple was the first place on earth exclusively for the devotion of Allah (ﷻ). The Muslims, who are the true heirs of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), in spiritual and ideological terms, must be the ones to rededicate this Sanctuary to the authority and sovereignty of Allah (ﷻ). After all, it is Allah's (ﷻ) house, not anyone's personal property.

Allah (ﷻ) entrusted two virtuous subjects of His to cleanse it and prepare it for those who would walk around it, for those who would abide near it in meditation, and for those who would bow down and prostrate themselves there. So this sacred Sanctuary was not even the property of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (ﷺ), its builders; they did not leave it as inheritance to any of their children. They were only maintaining it on Allah's (ﷻ) command for all those devotees and sojourners among the committed Muslims.

And, lo, Ibrāhīm prayed, “O my Sustainer! Make this a land secure, and grant its people fruitful sustenance — such of them who are committed to Allah and the Last Day.” [Allah] answered, “And whoever shall deny the truth [of My power], him I will let enjoy himself for a short while — but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: how vile a journey's end!” (2:126).

Notice how the word *secure* is repeated. In the previous *āyah*, and now in this one, the emphasis is on the security, safety and protective aura of the noble Sanctuary. Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) *du'ā'* beseeches Allah (ﷻ) to endow this human retreat with a base of defense and immunity from all acts of belligerence and tension, **“O my Sustainer! Make this a secure place.”** And yet the *du'ā'* has been shattered in recent times by the Saudi military, who have slaughtered unarmed people — Muslims seeking sanctuary under Allah's (ﷻ) protection — in exactly the area that Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) had asked Allah (ﷻ) to keep secure and safe.

The Saudi government, in disrespect to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), in violation of this *āyah*, and in defiance of Allah's (ﷻ) *ḥurumāt* (proscribed acts), has shed Muslim blood all over the area. They have desecrated it beyond reason and civility. Even the Quraysh, while they were custodians of this Ḥaram, respected and honored it as a sanctuary where an enemy could seek refuge. But the Saudi regime has brought in *mushrik* and *kāfir* forces to help them spill Muslim blood in the Ḥaram at least twice in less than two decades.

The first time was in 1979CE, when they turned Makkah and the Ḥaram into a war zone. The Saudis went after scores of Muslims, many of them local 'alims and their families, who had taken refuge in al-Bayt al-Ḥarām to protest the injustices and oppression of the Saudi regime. They were attacked with poison gas and then shot down in the very Ibrāhīmi precinct which by Islamic law — and by Arabian tradition dating back to the time of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) himself — is supposed to be the most secure place on the planet. But the Saudi monarchy yields to no law when it comes to upholding their tribal interest.

The second time was in 1987CE, when the Saudi usurpers of the two Ḥarams turned their guns on *hajjīs* from Iran and other countries. More than 400 *hajjīs*, who were rallying to demonstrate their disassociation with the *mushriks*, were killed. This was at a time when Islamic Iran was fighting for its survival against the combined might of worldwide *kufir*, which had instigated the Ba'athists of Iraq to invade Iran. The Saudis, not content with financing the *kufir* side, turned their guns on innocent Muslims from Iran and

other countries, again in the very same area that Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) had invoked as a land secure. And after all this they call themselves the custodians of the Ḥaramayn!

These slaughters were carried out by the Saudis with the assistance of French and German soldiers. It is well-known that non-Muslims have been specifically excluded from entering the sacred city and its Sanctified House. And yet these same Saudis lecture Muslims about *bid'ahs*: the *bid'ah* of saying a *du'ā'* after *ṣalāh*, of going to the graves of the *ṣaḥābah* and the Prophet's (ﷺ) family to recite the *Fātiḥah*, and of remembering and showing respect to these great personalities whose lives were a model of sacrifice and struggle. But when the Saudi family rides roughshod over divine ordinances concerning Makkah and Madinah, concerning the resources of the Muslim Ummah, and concerning alliances with the *kuffār* and the *mushriks*, Muslims are expected to look with kaleidoscope eyes and think that all is rosy and beautiful in the world of Islam. It is not.

Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) continued to implore Allah (ﷻ) saying, “...and grant its people fruitful sustenance — such of them as are committed to Allah and the Last Day.” Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is praying to Allah (ﷻ) to provide generously for those of Makkah's people who are committed to Allah's (ﷻ) power. But the way the Saudi clan is running the show, the goodness and resources of the land are locked in the family treasury, apart from what might overflow into the pockets of their cronies, confidants, and masters among the *kuffār*. Allah (ﷻ) has endowed the land of revelation with a surfeit of resources that, if properly and conscientiously supervised, would be a relief for the Ummah. But now, contrary to Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) *du'ā'*, the sustenance is the sole monopoly of the Saudi dynasty.

Sometimes it seems as if the decision-makers and policy-formulators who advise the Saudis know the Qur'an well and, in their hatred of it, deliberately do its very opposite. So where Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) calls on Allah (ﷻ) to provide bounties and wherewithal to those who are committed to Allah (ﷻ) in this Holy Land, the strategists of Banū Saud ensure that this abundance of *rizq* (subsistence and support) goes to those who are opposed to the power of

Allah (ﷻ) and defy the inevitability of the Last Day. Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) learned his lesson: he did not ask for sustenance and livelihood for his progeny and offspring except for those of **“...them who are committed to [the power of] Allah and the [eventuality of the] Last Day.”** Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) learned because he was mindful of Allah’s (ﷻ) presence; the Saudis have not, because they are not.

The Saudis are truly setting new standards of *bid‘ah* in seeking to have a family monopoly over the Holy Places, a monopoly unheard of in the past. And why not, some might suggest, as it appears that the Muslims are unable to call the Saudis to account in accordance with these holy words of Allah (ﷻ) and in light of His Prophet’s (ﷺ) effort to liberate Makkah. But it is undoubtedly for such as the Saudis, and for others who are not committed to the power of Allah (ﷻ) and the certainty of the Last Day that Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And whoever shall deny the truth [of My power], him will I let enjoy himself for a short while; but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: and how vile a journey’s end!” (2:126).**

This *āyah* is inclusive of today’s Saudi happy-go-luckies. They are enjoying themselves for a short while. They spend out of Muslim wealth; they roam the red-light districts of the metropolitan centers of the world, and they even have a semi-direct flight from Najd to Disneyland in Florida! They are to be found on exotic islands satisfying their carnal instincts; they are encountered at casinos and wild clubs from the Riviera to Las Vegas; and they are prominent in the homosexual circles of San Francisco and New York. And when finally they contract incurable diseases, they are to be found in the most expensive and exclusive clinics in America, Europe and Israel. **“I will let him enjoy himself for a short while — but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: and how terrible an end that is!”**

Now the vivid pen of the Qur’an paints a picture of Ibrāhīm and Ismā’il (ﷺ) as they dutifully carry out Allah’s (ﷻ) command in building the Ka’bah and purifying it for those who turn to it in sincere devotion. The picture in the Qur’an is alive when it says,

And when Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl were raising the foundations of the Sacred House, [they prayed,] “O our Sustainer! Accept You this from us; for, verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing! O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto You, and make of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto You, and show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance; for, verily, You alone are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace! O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle, who shall convey unto them Your messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom, and cause them to grow in purity; for, verily, You alone are Almighty, Truly Wise!” (2:127–129).

The meaning of the first sentence is quite clear: Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) are raising the foundations of the Ḥaram where the Ka‘bah is. These are the very same foundations that have been stained with Muslim blood at the hands of the Saudi officials of our generation. And as the Prophet Ibrāhīm and his son (ﷺ) were in the intensive effort of laying the foundations of the Sacred House in a desert where the climate was brutal and the terrain was harsh, as they were “sweating it out” so to speak — they turned to Allah (ﷻ) and said, “O our Sustainer! Accept You this from us; for, verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”

This is a prayer that suits prophets and prophethood: no arrogance, no mechanical human motions and no disrespect for their responsibilities and duties. They ask Allah (ﷻ) in all humility and meekness to accept their work. This is the type of emotional stability that comes from a relationship with Allah (ﷻ). It is also the type of emotional stability that should characterize all the followers and devotees of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and his family intimates. When minds are preoccupied with the day’s labor, and when hearts have to endure physical strain and exhaustion, then turning to Allah (ﷻ) in these demanding moments is a feat in and of itself.

These two vulnerable men on the barren sands of Arabia, under the pressure of building a sanctuary, beg Allah (ﷻ) to accept their dedication and consecration of this building. Is not there a striking contrast between prophets turning to Allah (ﷻ) in times of hardship and today's Saudis turning under pressure to the *mushriks* and the *kuffār* for acceptance? The inner-most thoughts and feelings of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ) are,

O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto You, and make of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto you, and show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance; for, verily, You alone are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace (2:128).

Obviously, the hopes and expectations of Prophets (ﷺ), and by extension all Muslims, are placed in the Acceptor of Atonement and the Grantor of Grace: Allah (ﷻ). They felt they were “in the middle of nowhere.” They knew that He is the only One who shows the way, and that their power and fortitude came from none else beside Him. As they surrendered to Him they also wanted their future generations to surrender to Him. They looked forward to having a solidarity of generations surrendering to Allah (ﷻ), **“...and make out of our offspring a community that shall surrender to You.”**

When a father is in possession of divine commitment he would also want his children to be in possession of such a valuable thing. It is only natural for these two fathers to ask that Allah (ﷻ) gift their future generations with a similarly firm commitment. At first, they asked Allah (ﷻ) to provide their future generations with sustenance; now they ask Allah (ﷻ) to provide their future generations with firm divine commitment. Along with that they ask Allah (ﷻ) to show them how to worship and adore Him and how to comply with Him. And they prayed to Allah (ﷻ) not to leave them without guidance or direction. They said,

O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle from among themselves, who shall convey unto them Your messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom and cause them to grow in purity; for, verily, You alone are Almighty, Truly Wise” (2:129).

The response to this appeal was to occur many generations later. However, in order for the reader to fully appreciate the fulfillment of Ibrāhīm’s *du‘ā’* and the accomplishments of the Muhammadi covenant-bearers, he should briefly contrast the Saudi appeal to *mushrik* powers with the Ibrāhīmi appeal to Allah’s (ﷻ) power. The discrepancy is unmistakable. Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) turned to Allah (ﷻ); the contemporary potentates in Arabia turn to the United States and Europe, in other words, to rebellious, arrogant and defiant power in the hands of *mushriks* and *kāfirs*. The best demonstration of the Arabian infatuation with *kufr* was during Gulf War I (1980–1988CE) and Gulf War II (1991), especially with the latter. These anti-Ibrāhīmi Arabians assembled a force of one-half million *kuffār* to “protect” them from the regime in Iraq — a regime they had previously financed during its decade-long war against Iran. Typically as is the case in all such circumstances, the country under siege, Iran, was the only one following in the traditions of Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ).

After several millennia, Ibrāhīm’s prayer was fulfilled with the advent of the final prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ). He descended from the offspring of Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ). He was a prophet who demonstrated Allah’s (ﷻ) power in the sphere of human effort and sacrifice, who taught scripture and advanced wisdom, and who purged Arabia of “superpower” impositions, images and intrusions. Allah (ﷻ) timed His response to Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) and the timing culminated with the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ). Had it been up to Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) they would probably have wanted their expected prophet to come in their own time, perhaps as the son or grandson of Ismā‘īl (ﷺ). But it is not up to man to determine these affairs. There is a larger program at work and only

Allah (ﷻ) can make the best decision. When the time came He, the Exalted, had Muhammad (ﷺ) emerge from the progeny of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ). Ibrāhīm and his son (ﷺ) placed their hopes and trust in the will and determination of Allah (ﷻ), and their prayers were fulfilled by the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ).

Remember these *āyāt* were revealed in Madinah when Yahūd were in a frenzy against the Muslims. The Yahūd place a premium on their descent from Abraham (ﷺ). But here the words of the Qur'an are a slap in the Yahūdī face. These words do not fit into the Yahūdī conceptualization of Abrahamic history. The Yahūd always distort these events, angling Abraham away from his eldest son Ismā'il (ﷺ) and placing far greater importance on his younger son Ishāq (ﷺ). In the midst of such Yahūdī distortions, the Qur'an reports verbatim the words of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ),

“O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle from themselves, who shall convey unto them Your messages, and impart to them revelation as well as wisdom and cause them to grow in purity” (2:129).

This *āyah* could not be more clear. Not only do Prophet Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) own words vindicate him from those who would want him to sit atop an exclusivist, racial patriarchy, but they also deliver an incontestable recognition to all readers of history, past and present. The inheritance of Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) role of leadership shall be on the basis of yielding to Allah (ﷻ) — Islam — and not on the basis of familial ancestry or racial cultivation.

This yielding community shall also inherit the Ḥaram. The sanctuary built by Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ) in Makkah belongs to those who yield to Allah (ﷻ) as an act of reason, conviction and belief. Its possession does not lie with traditional Arabian custodians on the basis of family lineage; nor does it lie with the Judeo-Christian “chosen people” mentality, which aggrandizes itself as it identifies with Abraham (ﷺ) and his children.

Anyone who claims Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), be they Arabians tracing themselves back through the lineage of Ismā'il (ﷺ), or Christians and Jews who trace themselves back to Abraham (ﷺ) through another ancestral bloodline, must listen to Allah's (ﷻ) words in response to Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) request for leadership in his descendants, **"My covenant shall not encompass the offenders."** And when Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) prayed for sustenance to be provided for the inhabitants of this land, he qualified his prayer, **"...such of them as are committed to the power of Allah and the [eventuality and certainty of the] Final Day."**

And when father and son undertook to build the Sanctuary in fulfillment of Allah's (ﷻ) command, they made it clear that they were "yielding to Allah (ﷻ)," and that their offspring should be "a community that yields to Allah (ﷻ);" and they prayed to Allah (ﷻ) to **"...send of [Ibrāhīm's] progeny an apostle of them."** This yielding feature is nothing but the Arabic word *Islam*. It is not inherited; it is acquired and assumed. And Allah (ﷻ) responded favorably, commissioning Muhammad (ﷺ) the son of 'Abdullāh, as the final prophet. It is this last of the Prophets (ﷺ) who assembled the *Islamic Ummah* that deliberately and reasonably inherits Allah's (ﷻ) covenant.

Once this point is established, the Qur'an pauses and turns to those who want to argue this point, those who are unnerved by Muhammad (ﷺ) being the final apostle, and those who are jealous of the Muslims being the voluntary inheritors of Allah's (ﷻ) covenant and divine trust. The Qur'an says to them,

And who, unless he be weak of mind, would want to abandon Ibrāhīm's doctrinal worldview, seeing that We have indeed raised him high in this world and that, verily, in the life to come he shall be among the righteous? As his Sustainer said to him, "Surrender yourself unto Me!" He [Ibrāhīm] answered, "I have surrendered myself unto [You], the Sustainer of all the worlds." And this very thing did Ibrāhīm bequeath unto his children, and [so did] Jacob, "O my children!

Behold, Allah has given this *dīn* to you; so do not allow death to overtake you unless you have yielded to Him” (2:130–132).

These *āyāt* mean that the *millah* (a community that is bound together with a creed) of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is open to everyone and anyone, and only a fool would exclude himself from this inclusive Abrahamic worldview of individual and collective faith, belief and philosophy. The Qur’anic purpose of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was for him to offer a widespread inclusive principle of faith and article of belief. Belonging to Abraham (ﷺ) was never meant to be a racial or race-related lineage, like the Israeli slant of Abraham (ﷺ). It is not the Semitic ethnology that distinguishes Abraham (ﷺ); it is rather the Semitic ideology that distinguishes him and places him far above the racist “Semitism” of Judaism. It is this exclusionary interpretation of Abraham (ﷺ) that has now become the Jewish mainstream because of the Zionist obsession with the political forgery called “Israel.”

The Qur’an is stating that only an imbecile would choose to deviate from the father-figure Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). But the overbearing forces of calculated European behavioral deviation have made it difficult for even a Qur’anic Muslim to break forcefully and confidently from the racialization of religion or the “religionization” of race. The “white man’s mentality” of viewing Abraham (ﷺ) through racial and racist lines has victimized Judaism in the name of Zionism and is now victimizing Islam in the name of nationalism. Put bluntly, the Jewish people, by and large, have enlisted into Zionism, tracing their authenticity to a racism that overrides all universal notions in Judaism. The Yahūd of Europe, armed with this white man’s mentality, invaded Palestine and slaughtered in the name of the “chosen people” innocent Semites who have lived there for all recorded history.

The white man’s mentality is his fixation with race. According to the worldview of the “white man,” it is implicitly understood that the civilizing element on earth is the European or the “white” man. All other races, colors and tribes are secondary to this “white” man. In the sophisticated nonverbal communication

of contemporary Western civilization, one established but subtle fact permeates all strata of Western society: “white” is the colour of privilege, and others can expect only the crumbs off the white civilization’s table.

Many Muslims are not privy to the rationalization of this “white man’s complex.” Those areas of the “white” mind that have strayed away from the character of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), even though they claim to belong to him, need to be examined more carefully.

Max Muller, often called the “father of the history of religions,” states,

Particularly in the early history of the human intellect, there exists the most intimate relationship between language, religion, and nationality.¹³⁰

This insight supplies the basis for a genetic classification of religions (associating them by descent from a common origin), which Muller believed the most scientific principle possible. According to this theory, in Asia and Europe dwell three great races: the Turanians (including the Ural-Altai peoples), the Semites and the Aryans. These three races correspond to three great families of languages. Originally, in some remote prehistory, each of these races formed a unity, but with the passage of time they split into myriad peoples with many distinct languages. Through careful investigation, however, the original unity may be discerned, including the unity of religion in each case.

Muller’s principal resource in developing the resulting classification of religions was the comparative study of languages from which he sought to demonstrate similarities in the names of deities, the existence of common mythologies, the common occurrence of important terms in religious life and the likeness of religious ideas or intuitions among the branches of a racial group. His efforts were most successful in the case of the Semites, whose affinities are easy to demonstrate and probably least successful in the case of the Turanian peoples, whose early origins are hypothetical. Muller’s greatest contribution to scholarship, however, lay in his study of Aryan languages, literatures and comparative mythology.

Because Muller was a scholar of the first rank and a pioneer in several fields, his ethnographic-linguistic and genetic classification of religions has not only been widely discussed but has had much influence. His classification has value in exhibiting connections that had been previously unobserved. Muller (and his followers) discovered affinities among the religious perspectives of both the Aryan and Semitic peoples, and set numerous scholars to investigating comparative mythology, thus contributing directly to the store of knowledge about religions.

There are, nevertheless, difficulties with the ethnographic-linguistic classification. To begin with, Muller's evidence was incomplete, a fact that may be forgiven, considering the state of knowledge in his day. More important is the consideration that peoples of widely differing cultural development and outlook are found within the same racial or linguistic group. Further, the principle of connection among races, languages and religions does not take sufficiently into account the historical ebb and flow or the possibility of developments that may break this connection, such as the conversion of the Aryan peoples of Europe to a Semitic religion, Christianity.

Other scholars have developed the ethnographic classification of religion to a much higher degree than did Muller. The German scholar Duren J. H. Ward, for example, in *The Classification of Religions*, accepted the premise of the connection between race and religion, but appealed to a much more detailed scheme of ethnological relationship. He says, "...religion gets its character from the people or race who develop or adopt it," and further,

...the same influences, forces, and isolated circumstances which developed a special race developed at the same time a special religion, which is a necessary constituent element or part of a race.¹³¹

In order to study religion in its fullness and to bring out with clarity the historical and genetic connections between religious groups, the ethnographic element must thus have adequate treat-

ment. Ward devised a comprehensive *Ethnographic-Historical Classification of the Human Races to Facilitate the Study of Religions – in Five Divisions*. These major divisions were (1) the Oceanic races, (2) the African races, (3) the American races, (4) the Mongolian races, and (5) the Mediterranean races, each of which had its own peculiar religion. The largest branch, the Mediterranean races, he subdivided into primeval Semites and primeval Aryans, in order to demonstrate in turn how the various Semitic, Indo-Aryan and European races descended from these original stocks.

This comprehensively unveils the racist approach to religion. It hides behind the words “ethnic” and “ethnographic,” but the white man’s complex shines through. Look at how different and how diverging the two visualizations of Abraham (ﷺ) are: the Euro-ethnic, which is adopted and promoted by the Zionist Yahūd, and the Qur’anic universal, which is the responsibility of the Muslims, caught as they are between the secular snare of the white man’s complex and religious ignorance of the divine Writ.

The Qur’an is very clear about humanity’s relationship to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). In the flow of time there have been many divergences from Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) manifest character. In our time the racist Yahūd and Christians are the ones who have literally abandoned Abraham (ﷺ) because all of their social and philosophical theories, which attempt to rationalize human behavior, are based on race, colour and national origin. This runs counter to the very essence of Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) mission. To put it simply, Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was a charismatic leader, who attracted followers because of his character and message, not because of the colour of his skin, eyes or hair. The genes of the world are pooled in the area of the twenty-five Qur’anically proclaimed Prophets (ﷺ) from the Nile to the Euphrates.¹³² There is no dominant gene that makes Abraham (ﷺ) a Semite in the Israeli sense of the word. There is no dominant gene that would make Abraham (ﷺ) look like a European in the “white” man’s usage of the word. And there is no dominant gene that would make Abraham (ﷺ) a “black” man in the reactionary mode of Afrocentrist people.

There is, however, a universality that bypasses these race definitions and encompasses Africans, Asians, Europeans and all others: his yielding to Allah (ﷻ) and his revolt against corrupt world powers and tyrannical rulers. This is what qualified him to be an imam, and a chosen imam for that matter; an imam who made his mark on this world and who awaits his reward in the next one, **“...as his Sustainer said to him, surrender [to My power].”** And Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) did not hesitate; he did not reply, “Well, let me think about it;” nor he did say, “But God, Your power seems to be absent most of the time, or when You do manifest Your power it is too little, too late!” Indeed, he uttered none of the equivocating and doubtful statements characteristic of those who are Muslim in name but lack the associated Islamic character. Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) showed no reluctance, nor did he prevaricate when he was told to yield to Allah’s (ﷻ) power and authority. He said, **“I yield to the Sustainer of the worlds” (2:131).**

This is the accurate relationship with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ): resigning in adversity to the One Power, the One Authority and the One Sovereign. All those Semites by genes or Semites by other means who do not share this character of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) are building castles in the sand. And all those non-Semites who are busy making ends meet, and who have the Abrahamic pulse of reliance on the One and Only God, are Abrahamic even if they are unaware of it.

It was Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) profound understanding of human nature and his sincere and fatherly care that focused his attention on future generations of his seed. He appealed to Allah (ﷻ) for familial acceptance; two generations later, Ya‘qūb (Jacob – ﷺ) made the same appeal. How is it possible to subvert an entreaty for generational guidance into a vainglorious attachment for self? Nonetheless, this marks the beginning of Israeli chauvinism, tribal solidarity and “chosen people” class differentiation. In their racial bias, they fail to note the transcending character of Abraham and Jacob, Isaac and Joseph (ﷺ). The words of the Qur’an burn Israel’s racist bigotry; so these Israelis choose to ignore the Qur’an when it speaks of these epic moments of prayer from

Ibrāhīm and his sons (ﷺ), **“O my children! Behold, Allah has entitled to you this *dīn*” (2:132).**

This is God’s chosen *dīn* for those who would accept it. It is not, as the Israelis would want us to believe, God’s chosen laws for His chosen race or His chosen people! The Israelis have cooked their religious books so heatedly that possession of the Holy Land, regardless of upright character and model behavior, is actually considered to be an expression of God’s will on earth! They say that, above all, Israel (Jacob) and by extension the Israelis inherited from Abraham and Isaac (ﷺ) the intimate communion with God, and “the promise that Canaan would belong to their seed.” With Israel (Jacob – ﷺ) this covenant was singularly marked by his dream at Bethel, and by his wrestling with the angel at the ford of Jabbok (Genesis, 32:23).

Little do the Israelis want to face the truth: the Holy Land goes with the Holy Word that dwells in a Holy spirit. The 20th-century Israelis have perverted scripture into a persistent militarism that has besieged the Holy Land regardless of God’s Word, His commandments, and His spirit. Who can deny the fact that the law of Israel, from its inception and for the foreseeable future, is a law that legalizes semi-nude beaches, permits pork and non-kosher food, tolerates every violation of the Sabbath, and imports prostitutes from around the world? The law of the land of Israel is a law that discriminates amongst Jews themselves: an Ethiopian Jew can never be equal with a German Jew, even if the former is wealthier than the latter! This racist Zionism that claims a lineage back to Abraham and Jacob (ﷺ) spills African Jewish blood in the streets of its cities and yet will not accept the same blood for medical transfusions because it is “tainted.” In Israel today, racism devours even its own.

The Holy Land does not belong to a people who betray and fail God. Contemporary Jewry has failed God by being unresponsive to prevailing attitudes of injustice. Driven by racial interpretations of history, racial motivations in their disposition towards others, and a racial complex that has no room for notions of equality and coexistence, they have rendered themselves incapable of

dealing with justice. It is for this reason that Allah's (ﷻ) words quoting the Abrahamic generation challenge these Israelis, **“And do not die except in a state of resignation to Allah.”**

The Qur'an offers these Israelis, with all their vices and transgressions, a final opportunity. But the Israelis are so insolent in their racist ambition, they do not want to hear the words of the Qur'an even as they echo Abraham and the biblical Prophets (ﷺ). The racist Israeli Yahūd insist on placing allegiance in Abraham, the genetic father, rather than Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) the father of non-aligned service and commitment to Allah (ﷻ).

Ibrāhīm's and Ya'qūb's (ﷺ) advice went unheeded by Israelis then and Israelis now. Jacob (ﷺ) was so concerned with this advice that he struggled in his last moments to convey it to his children. The death spell did not detract Jacob (ﷺ) from this exhortation and counsel,

Or were you [the Children of Israel] witnesses when Jacob was attended by death as he said to his descendants, “To whom will you conform after me?” They said, “We will conform to your God, the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ismā'il and Isaac, the One God to whom we will yield (2:133).

This is indeed a scene of lasting significance, the moment of death as it overtakes Jacob (ﷺ). The details are poignant; the air is grave; a prophet is dying. But what is on his mind? It seems that something is bothering him, even in these final moments. What could be so important and overwhelming that death itself is not the immediate concern even though it is the immediate fact? What is Jacob (ﷺ) trying to reassure himself of before he relinquishes life and steps into eternity? What assurances does Jacob (ﷺ) want to hear? He wants his children to convince and comfort him before he expires. But his experience with them built up enough uncertainty, causing him to worry about them despite the agonies of dying. And it is the ideological component of belief that he is so concerned with. It is the scope of commitment and the upholding of the whole

of the covenant that so captures the soul of Jacob (ﷺ) as he breaths his last. It can only be this that so preoccupies a father prophet as he hands down the responsibility to his apprentices, his own children, **“To whom will you conform after me?”**

It is as if he were saying, “For this reason have I called you all here to my deathbed, to ask you this question, ‘To whom will you conform and comply with after I am no longer here to supervise you in this divine trust?’ I want to hear it from you, I want to listen to you and see you reiterate your covenant duties and responsibilities before I lose these senses to death. Let me hear and see you say it.” Jacob says, in effect, that he will only rest in peace if his children promise they will uphold the covenant with all the fervor and commitment of the father; and they reply, **“We will conform to your God, the God of your fathers Abraham, Ismā‘il, and Isaac, the One God. We shall yield to Him.”**

They, of course, know their covenant tasks. Their father is their living example. They take it upon themselves to pass on the torch in the tradition of Jacob and Abraham (ﷺ) to the generations to come. And in saying so they relieve their father and comfort him. The covenant was fulfilled in the days of Jacob’s children. And they state for posterity that they are ones who **yield** to Allah (ﷻ); that is, they are Muslims.

This living Qur’an asks the children of Israel, **“Were you not witnesses as Jacob was summoned to death?”** The fact is that the Children of Israel were present; the Qur’an states this for the record. Any present-day Israeli who tries to deny this remarkable moment in history is doing so for some self-interest that conflicts with the covenant and the commandments. But the Qur’an has it all recorded; and if the Israelis are running from something, they are running from the glowing facts of this immutable Qur’an.

Here, the Qur’an seeks to ease the burden on the wayward Children of Israel who have abandoned commitment, covenant and commandments. The Qur’an wants to give them a fresh start. It tells them that no generation is held responsible for the deeds of another; no community in history can bear the burden of an earlier one. Likewise, the Yahūd who listened to the facts of this Qur’an,

as they were being recited by the Prophet (ﷺ) in the Arabian Peninsula, are not the children of Jacob (ﷺ) who carried the covenant as far as they could. There is a qualitative difference between the first generation of Jacob's (ﷺ) children and later generations of the Children of Israel, especially the Israeli Yahūd who opposed the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Israeli Zionists who are opposing virtue and justice in today's world. The following Qur'anic *āyah* captures the fact,

Now that social order has passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned; and you will not be judged on the strength [or weakness] of what they did (2:134).

This is also a way of disconnecting the bonds of tribal, ancestral, racial, and ethnic relations, which have provided the intellectual justification for the contemporary nation-state, built on nationalism. There can be no ethnic tie, no ancestral heritage and no national camaraderie that links the divinely-committed with the divinely-falterer. Islam is anti-nationalistic if nationalism means "my country, right or wrong." Muslims do not belong to their own family if the family is against God, not to speak of belonging to a nationalism that is against God. These are the two opposing forces of history. Muslims in their pre-Muhammadi history do not affiliate with those who deny God, and likewise Muslims in their post-Muhammadi history do not affiliate with those who deny God. Those who affirm the power of God are one bloc, even if they come from different families, different ethnic origins and different races. And likewise, those who deny the power of God are one bloc, even if they come from different families, different ethnic origins and different races.

This historical current has been obfuscated by the debris of prejudice and bigotry, both at the individual and societal levels. The attachment to truth and justice is so strong among the committed Muslims that all other complexes of the "white man" pale in comparison. In a social order of justice and grace, ethnicity, race, and

colour are secondary to quality of character, social equality and compassion for the fellow man. By contrast, there is the world gripped by the “white man’s complex,” where ethnic origin, race and colour are paramount and where the measure of decision-making comes from how much of God’s power is displaced, if not ignored altogether, by a convenient package of “laws” called secularism.

Nationalism builds on the common heritage and history of a people belonging to a particular race. This is unheard of in Allah’s (ﷻ) arrangement of human affairs. Human communities should be consolidated and related to each other according to their emotional and mental proximity to Allah (ﷻ). In the divine system on earth, justice and compassion formulate the communal basis of the social order.

Nationalism, as generally defined in the West-dominated world, is the social and psychological force emanating from “unique cultural and historical factors” that provide unity and inspiration to a people through a sense of belonging together and shared values. Nationalism binds together people who possess common cultural, linguistic, racial, historical or geographical characteristics and experiences, and who give their loyalty to the same political group. Modern nationalism began to make its appearance as a major political and ideological force in the early 19th century, particularly in Napoleonic France. In places where nationalism has taken root, it is often strengthened by ethnocentrism (the belief in the superiority of one’s race and culture), and xenophobia (an exaggerated fear or distrust of foreigners and of the policies and objectives of other nations).

The spirit of nationalism subjects people to the intangible forces of group psychology and collective behavior, especially when a crisis confronts them with a real or imaginary enemy. Nationalism tends to emphasize the separateness and superiority of racial or ethnic groups, such as Germans versus French or Palestinians versus Israelis. Most modern wars have been products of nationalism, in which mass emotion has been marshalled in favor of one nation against another. It has played a significant role in reformulating the world in a European political image. Nationalism nowadays is wan-

ing in Europe, its seedbed, and waxing strong, at least at the official level, in the Muslim hemisphere, of all places.

From this ideological deviation of nationalism comes the political deviation of the nation-state. A nation-state has become any sizable group of people united by common bonds of geography, language, race, custom, tradition, religion, “shared experiences” and “common aspirations.” It should be noted that not all “national groups” in this world have a nation-state. Modern nation-states began to emerge from the feudalism of 19th-century Europe. The community of nation-states was given political and legal recognition by the League of Nations, which ultimately morphed into the United Nations.¹³³

In the modern era, the nation-state has become the focus of collective feelings with which individuals identify. Increasingly, the results are turning different population bases in the world away from this nationalist sham. Many cobbled-together national groups have built their nation-state on a real or imagined fear and a shared hatred of other groups, or on a desire to bring others under their dominion. These conflicting national interests characterizing the world’s state system have contributed to the instability of international relations and to outbreaks of war.

The concept of the security and well-being of the nation-state, used in making foreign policy, is called the national interest. A national-interest approach to foreign policy demands “realistic” handling of international problems, based on the use of power divorced from moral principles and values. Conflicts of national interest in the nation-state system are resolved through diplomacy, international law, international institutions, or ultimately through war. Historically, national interest evolved as *raison d’état* (French for “reason of state”), a doctrine developed in the 16th century by Niccolò Machiavelli.¹³⁴ It holds that security and national advantage are paramount considerations in state action.

The concept of national interest is hazy and subjective in its application. Proponents of a realistic approach argue that it diminishes utopian expectations, recognizes the existence of power-politics, produces a steady and sober involvement in world affairs and

limits a state to attainable objectives. Opponents argue that the strongest foreign policy is one built on a firm moral base and that reliance on unilateral policies of national interest fails to provide for reconciliation of international interests. The doctrine of national interest dictates that moral principles, commitments and agreements should be disregarded if they conflict with nation-state policies or actions.

This political deviation from Allah (ﷻ) has given birth to another vice: national sovereignty. National sovereignty is a legal concept that, in international affairs, means statehood, political independence and freedom from external control. The concept of sovereignty invested in other than Allah (ﷻ) — for instance, in man himself or in the state — is one of the most potent and persistent misconceptions to have afflicted humanity. The modern world too has proved unable to evade its negative fallout as the nature of the global nation-state system has been shaped by the concept. The importance of sovereignty in the modern nation-state system has come largely from the decision-making processes of states competing for markets, resources and extension of political domain. Even for die-hard nationalists and national interest gurus, this has been a difficult force to overcome in creating a “new world order;” tensions naturally arise when rival political, military and economic international organizations with diverging national interests have decision-making powers. Sovereignty remains one of the major legal and psychological obstacles to the one-world plutocratic government of the super-rich.

This deviation from the power of the One God in the conscience of humanity on earth has mutated into a concentration of power among certain elites who come from the same race, nationality or linguistic group. This power of the state, away from Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance and authority, is exercised within boundaries free from any external interference. The idea behind sovereignty’s power-concentration can be traced to the nationalist notions that were nurtured in the historical experience of the Children of Israel. They repeatedly broke with God and provided the first expression of secular reasoning with a religious rationalization. On a political

level the Israeli mind's relationship to Abraham (ﷺ) is a nationalist one. Over time, philosophers and politicians who sought to justify the absolutism of kings developed the nascent Israeli attitude into an elaborate doctrine by cultivating the myth that divine intervention had accorded supreme power to the reigning monarch!

The early absolutist implications of sovereignty developed by such individuals as Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes gave way in time to the new concept of popular sovereignty developed by Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke.¹³⁵ The idea of sovereignty remains a significant factor in international relations. The concept of absolute sovereignty, however, has been modified by state consent, for example in international treaties, laws and organizations.

All of this political logjam, concentrated in the powers of nation-states, emerging as they did in the absence of an Islamic system, can be traced to the "nationalization" of Abraham (ﷺ) and the racialization of Israel. With modern nation-states beginning to fall apart (the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq and Lebanon, for instance), and with some nation-states seeking to survive by coming together — as in the European Union — people now have a better chance to reconsider where the mistakes began and then to rediscover the consolidation of human communities on the moral basis of scriptural definitions.

And they say, "Be Jews — or, Christians — and you shall be guided." Say, "No, but [ours is] the worldview of Abraham, who was independent of falsehood, and was not of those who default [on Allah's authority]." Say, "We are committed to Allah, and to that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ismā'il and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] Prophets by their Sustainer; we do not discriminate between any of them. And it is unto Him that we resign ourselves."

And if [others] commit themselves to a likeness of your commitment, they will indeed find themselves on the right path; and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and Allah will protect you from them: for He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [Say, “Our life takes its] hue from Allah! And who could give a better hue [to life] than Allah, if we but truly conform to Him?”

Say [to the Jews and the Christians], “Do you argue with us about Allah? But He is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer — and unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto you your deeds; and it is unto Him alone that we devote ourselves. Do you claim that Abraham and Ismā‘il and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants were ‘Jews’ or ‘Christians?’” Say, “Do you know more than Allah does? And who could be more wicked than he who suppresses a testimony given to him by Allah? Yet Allah is not unmindful of what you do” (2:135–140).

Having declared the undeniable historical facts as Allah (ﷻ) alone can, the Qur’an now moves forward to discuss some contemporary statements and attitudes of the “People of the Book.” The Qur’an, Allah’s (ﷻ) true and eternal word, takes them on. All they have to say blanches into insignificance in light of the Qur’an. The disputations they cling to are just words in the wind — words that conceal motives of racism and nationalism, having no foothold in any authentic scripture. The Qur’an’s all-encompassing human brotherhood illuminates the whole affair.

This is what happens when believers become egocentric. Thus there are Jews and Christians (as well as Muslims who have Judaized or Christianized their Islam) saying that one has to be a *Jew* or a *Christian* (or even a *Muslim*) to be guided and saved. Muslims have lost track of the meaning of Islam, which is man’s resignation to the overwhelming power of Allah (ﷻ). Because of this, these types of Muslims fall into the category of a self-centered Islam and incur the

verdict delivered by the Qur'an on the Jews and Christians who claim by virtue of birth that they are automatically redeemed.

The Qur'an preempts this attitude, **“Say, ‘But [be of] Abraham’s worldview, abhorring [reliance on] falsehood; and be not of those who ascribe authority and divinity to anyone [besides the One God].’”** This means that we should all — Jews, Christians, and Muslims — measure ourselves against Abraham (ﷺ), our common father-prophet figure and the model of human acceptance and resignation to the will and power of the One God. The Abraham (ﷺ) of the original covenant did not promote other authorities and deities alongside the One God; yet the rest of us are busy giving our fealties and allegiances to religious racism, racist religions, national interests, super-race concepts, the chosen people obsession and other false gods.

After plainly speaking to the Jews and Christians, the non-conventional and non-status quo Muslims are instructed to declare a “religious” unity of purpose, a sweeping integration of “religion” spanning the era from Abraham, the patriarch of Prophets, to Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ). Such unity and integration refers to the final command of yielding to Allah (ﷻ): Islam. All peoples of all heavenly scriptures are invited to this open house,

Say, “We are committed to Allah, and to what has been sent [from Him] to us, and that which has been sent to Abraham and Ismā‘īl and Isaac and Jacob and their children, and that which has been divinely revealed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been divinely revealed to all the [other] Prophets by their Sustainer; we do not discriminate between any of them. And it is unto Him that we all resign ourselves” (2:136).

It is this broad inclusiveness of Islam that qualifies it to be the final message of God. All scriptures and all Prophets (ﷺ) are equally accepted and equally honored in this complementary history. It therefore becomes natural to have Muslims who understand their Islam as a yielding to God’s will and power; to have Muslims who

have not secularized their approach to God, life and existence; to have Muslims who relate to all Prophets (ﷺ) fairly and equitably; and to have Muslims who fulfill the inheritance of the mantle of Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, among and including all other Prophets of Allah (ﷻ). This qualifies Islam and the Muslims to become the pioneers of a world-order that breaks down the barriers of race, the arguments of a “chosen people,” the formulas of an automatic salvation and all the other pseudo-religious litter. Islam, in a word, destroys all those concepts, ideas and behaviors that have impeded the interaction and coexistence of people, the vast majority of whom desire to live with dignity, honor and justice. In light of this, an Islamic social order has no basis for religious antagonism, no justification for religious or racial fanaticism and no room for any exclusion in the civic order of life and society.

This historical fact is well-established: wherever Islam was the dominant social order, non-Muslims did not suffer the ill consequences of any xenophobic Muslim attitude because the Islam in the hearts and minds of the Muslim public did not permit it. That is not to say that non-Muslims were never subject to the tyranny of power; they were. But so too were Muslims. In non-Islamic societies, however, aversion to “others” has a religious foundation that exhibits itself in nationalist and racist policies. A prime example is the Zionist policy of brutal military force supported by a xenophobic Yahūdī public opinion against the Palestinians and other Arabs; another is the jingoistic popular policy against the Muslim “others” in the Balkans, officially called “ethnic cleansing.”

The Christians and Jews have to realize that the Islamic commitment to Allah (ﷻ), by beckoning people of previous scripture and by emphasizing brotherly relationships, is the only working solution for an ever-shrinking world,

And if they [Christians and Jews] commit [to Allah by yielding to His will and power] as you [the Muslims] do, then [at that time] they are on a course of guidance. But if they turn away [from this decision to be guided] then they will remain in dissension.” (2:137).

These words come not from Muslims. They are from Allah (ﷻ), the Exalted. They endorse Islam as the only way out of a worldwide crisis, managed as it has been to this point by Western civilization, and impasse that will ultimately lead to nothing but conflagration. The Qur'an is a saviour if man makes up his collective mind and chooses Allah (ﷻ). Only Allah (ﷻ) can help a world that has around fifty low-intensity wars in process, most of them traceable to notions of national interest, national self-determination, and nationalist "ambitions." The Qur'an undeniably presents man with a supranational and transnational resolution to man-made conflicts. But this Islam cannot be forced upon Jews and Christians. They have to understand its validity, reason out its merits and acknowledge its divine source and authenticity. Short of that they are condemned to suffer, in turn condemning everyone else to suffer with them. The final arbiter of this irreconcilable mentality is Allah (ﷻ), **"And Allah will guard you from them: for He alone is the All-Hearing and All-Knowing."**

What is expected of Muslims is that they first do, and then say, what they stand for. Once a Muslim's behavior demonstrates and his words communicate the fact of his active yielding to Allah (ﷻ), he gains the status awarded to him by Allah (ﷻ). Muslims can never be the models they are required to be if they reduce their interest and their concerns to petty personal and selfish circles, as is the case with many nowadays. Look how expansive and all-encompassing these *āyāt* are: historically, ideologically, politically, militarily and otherwise. And notice too how most Muslims cannot even stretch their minds to follow these *āyāt*. But the rebirth of this Islamic mind has to become a reality. And we are confident that the future is an Islamic one because it is the will of Allah (ﷻ), **"[Say, 'Our life takes its] hue from Allah! And who could give a better hue [to life] than Allah, if we but truly commit ourselves to Him?'" (2:138).**

It is God's hue of life that makes life enjoyable and meaningful; it is man's muddying of life that makes it contemptible and miserable. The Qur'an exonerates Abraham (ﷺ), his children and grandchildren of racism yet this same racism is today espoused by

those who claim to be his descendants. Their racism is a belief that differences among people are rooted in blood and lineage. These differences include color, religion, bloodline and “national” origin. Racism involves the assumption that one’s own race is superior and that social and political organizations should reflect that superiority. Zionist persecution of Arabs in the last century is based on the thesis, claimed by them to be traceable all the way back to Abraham (ﷺ), that Israeli Yahūd constitute a superior race. As such they have the longest-running racism the world has ever known. In the United States “white racism” which has discriminated against “black people” in social and political institutions is a diluted version of its master: Zionist Israeli Yahūdī racism.

White racism was cited by the US president’s National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Report, so named after the commission chairman, governor Otto Kerner of Illinois) in 1968CE as the underlying cause of racial disorder in the US. Consider the Commission’s findings,

What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.¹³⁶

The bitterest fruit of white racism, said the Commission, was the exclusion of blacks from the benefits of economic progress and it called for a massive national commitment to reform. The concept of racism can never be thoroughly rejected without going to its “religious” roots.

Nevertheless, contemporary history makes it difficult to refute the Kerner report’s warning that the country “is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.”¹³⁷ Congressional legislation, executive action and court decisions since the 1950s demonstrate the profound and deeply rooted racism of the most “advanced,” standard-bearer country of the West. Racism cannot be eradicated in the courts when it thrives in tem-

ples, synagogues and churches. The frequent riots from Los Angeles to Miami, from New York to Chicago, the American national obsession with the O.J. Simpson trial, the burning of churches in the south, and other actions and reactions to the existence of church-deep white racism intensifies the race problem in America.¹³⁸ And, according to reports of the US Commission on Civil Rights, it extends to other non-white Americans as well, such as Chicanos and Native Americans.

Racism is so viscerally interwoven and so complex in the “white” establishment that if Jesus (ﷺ) turned out to be of “black” or “African” features, the “white” man would choose not to be Christian. To this Allah (ﷻ) answers,

Say [to the Jews and the Christians], “Do you argue with us about Allah? But He is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer — and unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto you, your deeds; and it is unto Him alone that we devote ourselves” (2:139).

Our deeds speak for us; your deeds speak for you. There is a God who knows and watches what we all do. Why would you, Jews and Christians, want to argue with us about an inclusive God? Why would you want to argue with us when we do not discriminate among God’s Prophets (ﷺ)? Why would you want to argue with us when we treat human beings, regardless of race or national origin, equitably and fairly? Our record speaks for itself. A non-racist God, a non-racist Abraham (ﷺ), and a non-racist Scripture has produced for humanity a cosmopolitan Ummah that is shared equally by “blacks,” “whites,” “Orientals,” and others. While your record speaks for itself. Christianity is, by and large, a “white” man’s religion, and Judaism is the religion of the “chosen race.”

This Islam belongs to Allah (ﷻ), and despite all the wars you have launched against Muslims, all the genocides you have instigated against Muslims, and all your demonization of this Islamic order, Muslims have still maintained an open heart and called you to see the light, **“Do you claim that Abraham and**

Ismā'il and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants were 'Jews' or 'Christians'?"

Abraham (ﷺ), Ismā'il, Isaac, and Jacob came before "Judaism" and "Christianity," so how could they have been Jews or Christians? They could only have been Muslims — those who yielded and complied with the purpose and resolve of Allah (ﷻ). **"Do you know more than Allah does?"** Answer us: do you — Jews and Christians — know more than God about Abraham, Ismā'il, Isaac and Jacob (ﷺ)? You are awestruck and dumbfounded on this point, as you should be. It is your egos, with their colour and race manifestations, that are dumbfounded and aghast, as they should be. Know that all your powers and forces will avail you nothing. Abraham (ﷺ) and his progeny were powerless in your ego-world, but they were powerful in their relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

You have tried your best to conceal this root-cause of world evil; you have almost succeeded. But the Muslim mind finds the facts in the Qur'an, which says about you, **"And who could be more offensive than he who conceals evidence presented to him by Allah?"** As you have tried to subvert His *dīn*, God knows what you are trying to hide. Your media almost pulled it off, but the Qur'anic beacon can never be extinguished, **"Yet Allah is not unobservant of what you do."**

That was an ummah that predated [yours]. It shall have what it derived [of its worldly proceeds], as you will have what you derived [of your worldly proceeds]; and you will not be held accountable for what they were doing (2:141).

This is a general rule. Nations and communities, expiring way back in earlier segments of history, will journey unto God with whatever sound deeds they have "invested" in their earthly life. We, the following generations, communities, and societies cannot and will not be responsible for what they did in years that have long lapsed. There shall be no advantage or disadvantage that belongs to a previous generation or a society "way back then in history" that

will haunt or be tagged onto a society or nation that has the opportunity to be itself, gain for itself, and live a life that is uniquely of its own making.

It should be obvious that this rule applies to nations and cultures, societies and civilizations. The word *ummah* includes within its aggregate meaning all consolidated human efforts centered around a future objective and garnered by a common purpose. And the same can be said about individuals. One individual is not going to stand in front of God bearing the burdens of other individuals — past or present. The *āyāt* in this detailed divine Writ read,

...and of Abraham, who to his trust was true: that no bearers of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden; and that naught shall be accounted unto man but what he is striving for (53:37–39).

This theme runs throughout the meticulous Qur'an. Understanding and behaving accordingly would cancel any pomp and pride about ancestors, historical glories, the "chosen race," and all other ancient and medieval claims that are fed into the ideological components of today's nationalisms and allegations of racial superiority.

In such a manner no one is born with and does not carry an original sin. And today's nations and societies have to report to Allah (ﷻ) on the Day of Judgment on their own merits or demerits regardless of how their antecedents and grandfathers performed or did not perform.

The traditional Christian doctrine that, by virtue of the Fall, every human being inherits a "flawed" or "tainted" nature with a predisposition to sinful conduct and in need of redemption is simply not accurate.¹³⁹ And these *āyāt* speak to that. There have been various interpretations of the Fall, ranging from the literal to symbolic accounts, and humanity's sinful condition. Try as they do, the traditional "Christian" theological discourses on "original sin" do not fly. Everyone will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for what they did in their capacity as individuals and in their capacity as nations.

Endnotes

- 1 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 2 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 3 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 4 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 5 *ijtihād* – the scholarly effort exerted by a *faqīh* (a Muslim qualified in matters of Islamic jurisprudence) or by an association of experts for the purpose of deriving a rule of divine law from four major sources of legislation: the Qur’an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), *qiyās* (analogy), and the consensus of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions. It concerns the development of solutions to problems not covered specifically in the Qur’an or Sunnah (for example, the proper use of nuclear power, water treatment, communications’ frequencies allocation, electronic cash flow, etc.), but for which the Qur’an and Sunnah act as a frame of reference, an axis around which all solutions revolve. The end result of an *ijtihād* is a recommended set of new behaviors which affirm Islamic principles of social justice. *Qiyās* and the consensus of companions are generally understood to be based on the primary two sources; however some schools of thought regard them to be independent sources in and of themselves. In theory, there has been considerable disagreement on the validity of the last two sources of legislation. Some schools of thought will not consider both or either of the two as legitimate sources, while others will even add more sources to these four. In practice, however, the process of actually formulating a new *ijtihād*, by whichever school of thought, finds itself using *qiyās* methodology, especially. Because of the peculiar unfolding of Islamic history, the bulk of *ijtihād* has been limited to personal and municipal affairs.
- 6 Islam – generally, throughout this *tafsīr*, the word “Islam” or “Islamic” is used in its generic meaning and not the specific “Islam” that was initiated with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This is because Islam characterizes a certain set of integrated behaviors which are distinct from those self-serving ones which characterize *kufr* and *nifāq*. It is these integrated behaviors which are endorsed by Allah (ﷻ) and which the Qur’an motivates human beings to conform to for their own benefit. Obviously, the elucidation of these behaviors and the inspiration to adhere to them long preceded the arrival of Muhammad (ﷺ), and go all the way back to Ādam (ﷺ), the first of Allah’s (ﷻ) Prophets. This is to say that Islam has been around ever since *kufr* and *nifāq* have been around. Thus in the same way that Banū Isrā’īl assumed a posture of “owning” guidance by corrupting the meaning of “chosen people,”

and thereby felt offended when the final prophet was not sent to them, Islam is not particularly “owned” by anyone. If it could possibly belong to someone, it would only be to a community of people who are securely committed to making Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance a real part of their lives; and as such, this community is open for anyone and everyone to join. There is nothing exclusive about it, either in time or place. Accordingly, those who made a secure commitment to Allah (ﷻ) in times past may be characterized as “Muslims” or “Islamic” in the generic sense. Conversely, the ceremonial, ritual, or generational Muslims of today, who are at a distance from Qur’anic guidelines, may fall into *kufir* and *nifāq* like anyone else and hence not qualify for the “Islamic” designation. The unique aspect of the Muhammadi experience, in relation to the previous prophetic missions, was that personal, organizational, and societal obligations were consolidated into a dynamic civic order. This order, replete with interactive state, economic, social and military institutions, would be governed by divine principles of social justice, set down for man in the Qur’an as a mercy from Allah (ﷻ) for all times to come. This distinction should be borne in mind and will be made clear wherever necessary.

7 From previous *tafsīrs*.

8 From previous *tafsīrs*.

9 From previous *tafsīrs*.

10 From previous *tafsīrs*.

11 *shahādah* – a declaration of faith which literally refers to the phrase, “*Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allah, wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allah*: I bear witness [testify] that there is no deity/authority [worthy of conformity] other than Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” This short sentence is pronounced by one becoming a Muslim for the first time, or in other words, by one adopting the body of Islamic thoughts and behaviors as his own. While this may be viewed as a passcode, so to speak, for admission into Islam, a Muslim who finds himself more and more attached to Allah (ﷻ) over time, may utter this phrase several times a day. The *meaning* of these few words cannot begin to be captured by the translation above, and thus forms the general subject of this *tafsīr*.

12 *Yahūd* – this is a Qur’anic term which is more precise than the term *Jew* or *Jewish*. What or who a Jew is or represents, is not entirely clear and there is considerable disagreement even amongst Jewish theologians. Is a Jew an adherent of Judaism as a religion and culture? But the Talmud clearly makes no distinction between a “religious Jew” and a “secular Jew.” Is a Jew a genet-

ic (racial) descendant of Yehudah, the fourth son of Jacob (ﷺ)? And if so, can someone not of this racial lineage “become” a Jew? Or, for one to be a Jew, must his mother be a racial descendant of Yehudah? And within this racial context, can one be a Jew regardless of his moral or religious character? Or, can one be a Jew without “believing” in God? Furthermore, are *Jews* and the *Children of Israel* one and the same group? Or, are Jews a part of the Children of Israel? Or, are today’s Jews *the* Children of Israel? Or, are they simply the descendants of the historical inhabitants of a geographical area called Judea? Insofar as the Qur’anic discourse is concerned, all of these questions are largely irrelevant. Yahūd refers to a group of people who claimed to be scriptural adherents of *al-Tawrah* and who used that scripture to rationalize opposition to Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ) and the Truth. This posture was distinct from the *mushriks* of Makkah who did not cite scripture as a basis for hostility against Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). By referring their opposition to God, these Yahūd gave themselves a preeminent position amongst the larger body of non-scriptural forces against the Prophet (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ), in the Qur’an, attaches a name to a posture or a certain set of behaviors; and He wants Muslims to understand that these groups are enduring power blocs at any time or place of general human experience. Thus, in today’s world, those Evangelicals, Moral Majorities and Born Agains who quote the Old and New Testaments as a justification for occupation, abuse and dispossession, are just as Zionist or just as Israeli as those who claim to be Jews of the same thought process. All those who use scripture to validate systems of injustice qualify to be described by the Qur’anic descriptor, *Yahūd*. Does this description refer to *all* those who claim to be Jews? Obviously not! It only refers to those whose Judaism and Old Testament have become corrupted by nationalist, racist and elitist postures which are generally cozy with depraved and unprincipled power structures.

- 13 *muttaqī* – the Arabic plural for *muttaqī* is either *muttaqūn* or *muttaqīn*; however, in the transliteration, to make things easier on the reader who might be unfamiliar with Arabic and its lexical rules, the plural will be represented by *muttaqīs*.
- 14 The other *sūrah*s are *Āl-Imrān* (3), *al-A’raf* (7), *Yūnus* (10), *Hūd* (11), *Yūsuf* (12), *al-Ra’d* (13), *Ibrāhīm* (14), *al-Ḥijr* (15), *Maryam* (19), *ṬāHa* (20), *al-Shu’arā’* (26), *al-Naml* (27), *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28), *al-Ankabūt* (29), *al-Rūm* (30), *Luqmān* (31), *al-Sajdah* (32), *YāSīn* (36), *Ṣād* (38), *Ghāfir* or *Mu’min* (40), *Fuṣṣilat* (41), *al-Shūrā* (42), *al-Zukhruf* (43), *al-Dukhān* (44), *al-Jāthiyah* (45), *al-Aḥqāf* (46), *Qāf* (50), and *al-Qalam* (68).
- 15 The term “literalist” here is used in the generic sense, not with the *madhhabī* (school of thought) connotation.

- 16 Here the term “mystics” refers to Sūfis and their writings.
- 17 The “third type of *mufasssīrūn*” refers here to the rationalist stream of thought within the literature of *tafsīr*. Specifically, reference would be given to the Mu‘tazilīs, al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī in early Islamic history; and in recent Islamic history, to Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and the Tunisian scholar Ibn ‘Ashūr.
- 18 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 19 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 20 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 21 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 22 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 23 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 24 This refers to the interpretations of those scholars who have become court ‘ulamā’ in such government establishments like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Pakistan, etc.
- 25 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 26 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 27 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 28 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 29 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 30 Ṣādiq al-Mahdī – Born in 1936, he is head of the National Ummah Party in Sudan and leader of the Anṣār, a Sufi sect that pledges allegiance to Muḥammad Aḥmad, who claimed in the 1880s to be the awaited Imam Mahdī. Ṣādiq al-Mahdī, a controversial figure, was Prime Minister of Sudan twice: from 1966–67 and again from 1986–1989. On the second occasion, he formed a coalition government comprising his Ummah Party, the National Islamic Front (led by his brother-in-law, Ḥasan al-Turābī); the Democratic Unionist Party (led by Al-Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Uthmān al-Mirghānī); and four small Southern parties. In 1989, his government was

overthrown in a coup led by ‘Umar Ḥasan Aḥmad al-Bashīr, who remains president of Sudan as of the writing of this endnote (March 2008). His tenures in power were mired in instability and controversy including allegations of nepotism and lack of respect for law and due process. In the late 1970s, he even supported a military incursion into Sudan from Libya through the Darfur region where he had armed certain tribes to win their support. Many members of his family were given prominent ministerial roles while he was Prime Minister, including Mubārak al-Fāḍil al-Mahdī, who was Interior Minister in the late 1980s, a period during which many human rights abuses occurred. While claiming to be representing an Islamic Party, he has deep links with Western organizations that aim to undermine Islam in Muslim societies. Ṣādiq al-Mahdī is a member of the Club of Madrid, a Western-backed organization that under the guise of promoting democracy, aims to keep Islam at bay in Muslim societies. The “democracy project” has now been exposed with Western incursions and “democratization” attempts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and a host of other Muslim countries.

Masoud Rajavi – an Iranian national who opposed Imam al-Khomeini and established a paramilitary center, chiefly aimed at destabilizing the Islamic government, in Iraq close to the Iranian border. He assisted Iraqi forces in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War and participated in Saddam Hussein’s massacre of the Kurdish people. Rajavi served as leader of the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Islam (better known as the Mujahideen Khalq), a Marxist organization hostile to the Islamic Republic. Since the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, he is presumed to be dead or missing. His wife, Maryam Rajavi, frequently seen in Western capitals, is now head of the organization.

- 31 In Arabic, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statement was, “*Nuṣirtu bi-al-ru’b masirata shahr.*” – From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 32 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 33 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 34 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 35 From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 36 *Sīrah al-Najm: 14.*
- 37 Judith Miller, a Jewish American journalist, was a prominent reporter with the New York Times and had access to top government officials. She is known for her hostile, orientalist slant against the Muslim world in her

reporting and books such as *God Has Ninety-Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East*. In the run-up to the Gulf war, where the US invaded and then occupied Iraq, Judith Miller provided “facts” indicating that Saddam Hussein had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction. All of her stories were later discredited; later she went to prison for a short time in the Lewis Libby/Valerie Plame case for not revealing the source of the leak which outed CIA agent Valerie Plame.

- 38 This hadith refers to those animals, not human beings, that instinctively break from their natural domain and habitat; thus it is permissible to kill these animals even in “life-sanctified” or inviolable areas such as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. However, even though the hadith refers to animals, the meaning of the word *fāsiq* clearly comes through; especially in describing the characteristics of certain human beings who respond instinctively the way these animals do. The hadith can be found in previous *tafsirs*.
- 39 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 40 There are many such instances where the Yahūdī interpretation of scripture takes the form of mocking Allah (ﷻ), His Messenger (ﷺ), or the revealed word of the Qur’an; or it introduces irrelevant arguments, for which there is no information, with a view to confusing those who have made a secure commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and obfuscating what is important. One example of this behavior can be found in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*:64; there are several others.
- 41 *rationality*, as opposed to Rationalism which is a type of epistemology, a branch of Western philosophy.
- 42 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 43 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 44 In Arabic, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statement was, “*La yadkhulu al-jannah man kāna fi qalbihi mithqalu ḥabbatin min kibr.*” – From previous *tafsirs*.
- 45 Levy Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel from 1963–1969, Minister of Agriculture in 1951 and Minister of Finance from 1952–1963. He was part of the Jewish Legion of the British Army during World War I, and later, in 1940, joined the Haganah, a paramilitary organization that became the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) after the creation of the Zionist State. During the Six Day War in 1967, he extended Israeli military occupation to include the Golan Heights, the Sinai peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem; he also covered-up the unprovoked attack on a US surveillance ship, the USS Liberty.

Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel from 1969–1974, Minister of Labor from 1949–1956, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1956–1966, and first secretary general of the Labor Party. The major event during her administration was the Yom Kippur War in 1973. She became infamous for her statement, “There is no such thing as a Palestinian people... It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn’t exist.” Ironically, she, her husband and sister immigrated from the United States to a place called Palestine in 1921. Upon settling in Palestine, they joined a *kibbutz* (an exclusivist Israeli settlement organized under collectivist principles).

Menachem Begin, first Israeli Prime Minister from the Likud block, 1977–1982. In 1942, he joined the Irgun, an Israeli Paramilitary Organization that later resurfaced as the Shin Bet (or Shabak, the Israeli Internal Security Service, apparently modeled on the FBI of the United States) after the establishment of the Zionist State; and later in 1944, he headed the organization. The Irgun and the Stern Gang were responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre in 1948 and the blowing-up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, 1946. After the Deir Yassin massacre, Begin is reported to have said to the perpetrators, “Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest...” The Irgun was also responsible for bombing Sephardic Jewish villages in the areas surrounding Palestine in a bid to scare them to immigrating to Palestine, thus artificially building-up the Jewish numbers in Palestine. These bombings were blamed on the Arabs so that the Sephardic Jews, who had lived peacefully with the Arabs for centuries, would become estranged from their Arab hosts. During his tenure as prime minister, he was a party to the Camp David Accords in 1979 along with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and US president Jimmy Carter; he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this public facade of reconciliation. In 1981, he ordered the Israeli Air Force to bomb and destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor in Osirak; this operation was carried out with the help of American intelligence and surveillance guidance. In 1982, he ordered the invasion and subsequent 20-year occupation of Southern Lebanon. He was also prime minister when his defense minister, Ariel Sharon, ordered the shelling of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps on September 15, 1982; and then he sat idly by as the IDF and the Lebanese Phalange slaughtered as many as 3,500 defenseless Palestinian men, women, children and babies over the next 3 days. His words reveal his contempt for all things Palestinian, “[The Palestinians] are beasts walking on two legs.” Considering himself to be basically a European Jew, he was not known to have used similar words for the British and the Nazis, one of whom would not accept migration of Jews escaping Germany and the other well-known for its aversion to all things Jewish.

Yitzhak Rabin, twice Israeli Prime Minister from 1974–1977 and 1992–1995, Minister of Labor from 1973–1974, and Minister of Defense

from 1984–1990. In 1995, he was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Orthodox Jew who opposed Rabin’s signing of the Oslo Accords for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. He joined the Haganah in 1941 and later became its Chief Operations Officer. While he was defense minister, the first Palestinian Intifada broke out; Rabin gave the green light to “break the bones” of the protestors. It was during this time that the IDF started using rubber bullets and the Israeli government tried to run a public relations campaign to show that they were being humane in using these to disperse the resistance rather than kill them; however, the majority of the rubber bullet injuries were in the chest, neck and head areas of the targets resulting in mass casualties on the Palestinian side. In a statement rationalizing the surreptitious ethnic cleansing of the West Bank, he said, “[Israel will] create in the course of the next 10 or 20 years conditions which would attract natural and voluntary migration of the refugees from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to Jordan. To achieve this we have to come to agreement with King Hussein [of Jordan] and not with Yasser Arafat [founder of the Palestine Liberation Organization].”

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister from 1996–1999, Foreign Minister from 2002–2003, Finance Minister from 2003–2005, Ambassador to the United Nations from 1984–1988, and the leader of Likud from 1993–1999 and 2005–2008. He served five years in the Israeli military as the captain of a commando unit. In a 2002 speech on terrorism, he said, “Militant Islam seeks to roll back the last millennium, the last one thousand years of history. It seeks to go back to a world in which Islam was ascended and the West was subpar. It seeks to reverse the rise, especially in the last five hundred years, of Western civilization as we know it. And it seeks to achieve this not by healthy competition of technology, economics, and culture, but by destroying the West which means destroying the main engine of the West, the United States. That is its goal. It is possessed with this goal. It wants to dominate the world and in this it is not different than Soviet communism. But I have to say this about the Soviets. Every time that they had to choose between their ideology and their survival, they always, always chose their survival... The same cannot be said of militant Islam. When faced with the choice of their zealotry or their lives, it is not clear what they will choose. That is why militant Islam produces suicide bombers. Did you ever hear of a communist suicide bomber? Never. But militant Islam produces battalions of them. You have mothers that hold up their children, their babies, and say ‘I hope he will be a martyr for Allah.’ You have suicide kindergarten camps, and suicide museums, and suicide glorification.”

46 These three are normally presented as the quintessential examples of European anti-Semitism. Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy (1847–1923) is well-

known because of his role in the Dreyfus Affair in which a Jewish artillery officer in the French army, Alfred Dreyfus, was convicted and then later acquitted of treason. Esterhazy hailed from a wealthy Hungarian family, which became settled in Paris, France at the end of the 17th century. Although much remains obscure about Esterhazy's ancestry, historical records suggest that Esterhazy's great grandmother had an illegitimate son, Walsin, who himself had two sons. One of these two was the father of Ferdinand Esterhazy. However, historical information about virulent European anti-Semites has been infected with a heavy dose of political revisionism, and thus it is hard to identify what is accurate and what is not. Many historians, after exhaustively evaluating the events and the political climate around the Dreyfus Affair, indicate that Esterhazy was, in fact, the author of the *bordereau* (artillery list), which was earlier attributed to Dreyfus, and thereby used as evidence to incriminate him. In any case, one incontrovertible fact is that French Military Justice acquitted Esterhazy of the same charge and allowed him to migrate to England in 1898. He lived there until his death in 1923. A side point worth noting is that the Jewish-Austrian journalist, Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, covered and reported on the trial of Alfred Dreyfus. Soon after the trial, Herzl published *The Jewish State* (originally titled *Address to the Rothschilds*) and founded the World Zionist Organization, which together provided the institutional and financial support, along with the racial rationalization, for the creation of a Jewish enclave in Palestine.

- 47 Daniel Francois Malan (1874–1959), champion of Afrikaner nationalism and first prime minister of the Apartheid government in South Africa. In 1905, he completed a Doctorate in Divinity at the University of Utrecht in Holland. He then became an ordained minister of the Dutch Reform Church and preached for several years before entering government service. During WWII, he advocated that South Africa not get involved militarily, but should otherwise give all other support to Germany. He also led the opposition to Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany entering South Africa. Shortly after the war, his party, the Herenigde Nasionale Party or HNP, won a majority in the parliament and then infamously formed the new government that initiated the racial separation laws known as Apartheid. Daniel Malan was prime minister of this government for six years from 1948–1954. Included in the legislation introduced, passed and implemented by this government was the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, Native Laws Amendment Act, the Abolition of Passes Act, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, and the Bantu Education Act. These laws classified all South Africans according to race; forbade mixed marriages; restricted the movement of Africans; limited Africans' access to

ownership of property, jobs, education and services; and reserved representation for whites alone. Similar legislation under different names has also been passed in the State of Israel to discriminate against the indigenous Arab population. Malan is considered to be a French name.

- 48 Evidence of Adolf Hitler's paternal ancestry is largely circumstantial as he and the SS tried laboriously to cover up his past by destroying all the evidence of his grandparents' origins; for instance he burned down the entire village where his grandmother, Maria Anna Schicklgruber, came from. Nonetheless, historical records indicate that Alois, Hitler's father, was the illegitimate son of Maria Schicklgruber, who worked as a maid for either the wealthy Jewish Frankenbergers of Graz or the Rothschilds, and the son of her employer. Alois kept his mother's name, Schicklgruber, until his third marriage to Anna Potzl, who forced him to change his name to Hitler in order to qualify for a family inheritance.

David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) was born in Poland, which was at the time of his birth part of the Russian Empire. He adopted the Hebrew name Ben-Gurion in 1912; his father's name was Avigdor Grün. Interestingly, the word *grün* (German for *gruen*) means *green*, *fresh* or *raw*. As a name, it was given to a person or people who lived in a green or leafy place, suggesting a general categorization of people who worked the land (for example, farmers). This would have been a rather strange surname for a European Jew, especially a Polish Jew. Of all the European Jews, the last to be emancipated were those who were part of the Russian Empire. Polish Jews did not have the right to own property until the middle part of the 19th century whereas other Jews in Europe had been given this right for at least a century. Because of this peculiar Jewish bantustanization in Europe, Jews were confined to their own ghettos in the major cities of Europe and thus excelled mainly in the mercantile professions (services, loan agents, lawyers, buying and selling, trading, etc.). To carry a name such as Grün would suggest that at some point in Ben-Gurion's ancestry, a Jewish family married into a land-owning or land-working family (non-Jewish), or that powerful landowners fathered illegitimate children from Jewish women. With the mass persecution, annihilation and extermination of Jews in Europe in the millennium preceding the 20th century (numbering in the hundreds of thousands if not millions), to maintain a racially pure Semitic lineage would have been impossible. In particular, as far as David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of the State of Israel, his paternal and maternal ancestors would have converted to Judaism one generation or at most a few generations before the birth of his father, Avigdor Grün, placing the family's Jewishness in and around the 18th or the early 19th century.

Ben-Gurion was the first Israeli Prime Minister from 1948–1954, 1955–1963. He was part of the Jewish Legion of the British Army during World War I. In 1935, he became the chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and functioned in that capacity until the creation of Israel in 1948. Despite the British restriction of Jewish immigration to Palestine to 15,000 per year during World War II, Ben-Gurion organized the secret immigration of thousands of European Jewish refugees to Palestine. At the same time he encouraged Jews to fight with the British against the Nazis. This gave him the opportunity to construct a Zionist army which would eventually occupy Palestine and convert it into a Jewish State. In the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and the ensuing emergence of the Zionist State, Ben-Gurion was the main political force responsible for the expulsion or “transfer” (as Jewish historians like to characterize it) of Palestinians from the occupied territories. He was probably the prime minister during the Lavon Affair, because he severely assailed the next prime minister, Levi Eshkol, for mishandling the consequences relating to the affair. He was also in office when Israel secretly began to acquire nuclear technology from the United States in 1956. Even though revisionist historians, especially in the US and the UK, have tried to sugarcoat the occupation, Ben-Gurion was quite clear about what he was doing. Ten years before the creation of Israel, he said, “We must expel Arabs and take their places...” and “Let us not ignore the truth among ourselves... politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves... The country is theirs, because they inhabit it, whereas we want to come here and settle down, and in their view we want to take away from them their country.” After the occupation when he was prime minister, he said “Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehushua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population.” Yitzhak Rabin, in his memoirs, recalls, “We walked outside, Ben-Gurion accompanying us. Allon repeated his question, ‘What is to be done with the Palestinian population?’ Ben-Gurion waved his hand in a gesture which said ‘Drive them out!’”

49 A few of these Yahūdīs include Steven Emerson, Judith Miller and Daniel Pipes. Refer to Pipes’ book, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*. Some Muslims have also come out in defense of Rushdie and “freedom of expression.” References are given below,

Daniel Pipes, *The Rusdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*. (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990CE).

Anouar Abdallah et. al., *For Rushdie: Essays by Arab and Muslim Writers in Defense of Free Speech*. (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1994CE).

- 50 In addition to W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, who were African-Americans, and several white liberal descendants of abolitionists including Mary White Ovington and Oswald Garrison Villard, the NAACP was also cofounded by some wealthy Jews. These included Julius Rosenthal, Joel and Arthur Springarn, Lillian Wald, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Stephen Wise and Henry Malkewitz. In fact, the first president of the NAACP, Moorfield Storey, was Jewish, as were its second, third and fourth presidents. Jews made financial contributions to many civil rights organizations including the NAACP, the Urban League, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Congress on Racial Equality; furthermore, they participated heavily in legal activities, publicity campaigns and political lobbying efforts. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were both drafted at the Emily and Kivie Kaplan Religious Action Center in Washington, DC. During the 1960s, at least half of the civil rights attorneys in the American South were Jews.
- 51 Jews active in the ANC at the time of the Rivonia Treason Trial, which sent Nelson Mandela to Robben Island for 27 years, included Lionel Bernstein, Bob Hepple, Denis Goldberg, Harold Wolpe, Arthur Goldreich, Hazel Goldreich and James Kantor. Of the 19 people arrested at Lilliesleaf Farm in the Johannesburg suburb of Rivonia, 13 were black and 6 were white; five of the six whites were Jews. Amazingly, none of the Jews were sent to Robben Island. In fact, Lionel Bernstein and James Kantor were acquitted; Harold Wolpe, Arthur Goldreich and his wife Hazel escaped and did not stand trial; Bob Hepple threatened to turn state witness and was released; only Denis Goldberg received a life sentence and served 22 years at the Pretoria Central Prison. At the conclusion of the famous trial, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi, and Andrew Mlangeni (all black) were sent to Robben Island to serve life sentences under a conviction of treason and sedition. Of the Jews, Bob Hepple fled to England where he ultimately became a professor of law at Cambridge. Bernstein, who helped write the constitution of the MK (or *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the Spear of the Nation — the military wing of the ANC, headed by Nelson Mandela), was acquitted and fled to England where he worked as an architect; he returned to South Africa for a short time in 1994 after Nelson Mandela was elected president. Denis Goldberg, who was

offered clemency in 1985 by the South African government in return for renouncing violence, accepted the offer and left for Israel where he still lives. Arthur Goldreich, who had been a member in 1948 of the Palmach, the military wing of the Haganah, returned to Israel after escaping from South Africa; he currently lives in Herziliya and has characterized the “bantustanism of Palestinians” and the “abhorrent racism in Israeli society” as akin to apartheid in South Africa.

- 52 The Arabic press at the time (1998) was inundated with this newsitem – from al-Quds al-‘Arabi newspaper.
- 53 The Jewish Encyclopedia cites Old Testament and rabbinical sources that have variously characterized *manna* as “light bread,” the “corn of heaven,” and the “bread of the mighty.” It was generally collected before sunrise and all that was gathered had to be used or else it would spoil; it could not be saved or stored for the following day(s). Except for the Sabbath, it was known to have blanketed the ground on every other day of the week. The *manna* which appeared on Fridays was different than the *manna* of the other weekdays in that it stayed fresh for two days (to accommodate the Sabbath). As far as look and feel, *manna* was described to be like coriander seed with the color of bdellium; it felt warm to the touch and also had a fresh perfumed scent. The grains were collected and ground into flour and then the flour was baked into cakes or flatbreads, tasting like “wafers made with honey” or “as the taste of fresh oil.” Sayyid Quṭb and Sayyid Abū al-‘Alá Mawḍūdī both suggest in their *tafsīrs* that, in the morning, the Children of Israel would find the ground covered (like a frost) with a special type of food, *manna*; and in the evening, flocks of quail would be available for them to catch and eat. Mawḍūdī cites references from the Old Testament indicating that the shade from the clouds and the provisions of *manna* and quails lasted for the entire time the Israeli refugees were inhabiting the desert, about 40 years. However, as the Qur’an is merely issuing brief references as reminders to Banū Isrā’īl of Allah’s (ﷻ) care and compassion, it gives no indication of the duration of this particular set of miracles. Suffice it to say that neither *manna*, nor quails and clouds, are a commonplace occurrence in any desert.
- 54 Before Allah (ﷻ), through the leadership and guidance of His Messenger (ﷺ), changed the character and socialization of the people around Muhammad (ﷺ), He referred to these people in the Qur’an as *al-a’rāb* or as is translated here, *Arabians*. Thus the pre-Islamic peoples who inhabited the peninsula with all of their exclusive and exclusionary tribal affiliations and tendencies shall be referred to as *Arabians* in this *tafsīr*. However, the same people in their post-Islamic incarnation acquired an inclusivist socio-political orientation whereby anyone who came to speak the Arabic lan-

guage became part of them, or became an Arab so to speak. According to a hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ), “*Yā ayyuhā al-nās, inna al-rabba rabbun wāḥidun wa-inna al-aba abun wāḥidun wa-inna al-dīna dīnun wāḥidun wa-inna al-‘arabīyata laysat lakum bi-abin wa-lā ummin. Innamā hiya lisānun fa-man takallama al-‘arabīyata fa-huwa ‘arabīyun: O people, verily the Sustainer is One and the father [Adam] is one and the dīn is one and indeed the Arabic language does not descend through the father or the mother [is not an ethnic language]. It is a language, therefore whoever speaks Arabic is an Arab.*” Thus those pre-Islamic Arabians who imbibed Allah’s (ﷻ) final communiqué to humanity, who socialized themselves according to it, and who became its chief executors and examples, shall be referred to as Arabs in this *tafsīr*. Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, in his book, *On Arabism, ‘Urūbah and Religion*, gives an excellent dissertation of this important point.

Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *On Arabism, ‘Urūbah and Religion*. (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Djambatan N.V., 1962CE).

55 In Arabic, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statement was, “*maḍā ‘ahdu al-naumi yā Khadijah.*” – From previous *tafsīrs* and books of *Siraḥ*.

56 Fahd ibn ‘Abdu al-‘Azīz – king of Saudi Arabia from 1982 to 2005, Fahd’s legacy was uncritical obedience to American geopolitical initiatives. Fahd was instrumental in setting up military-camp style *madrasas* in Pakistan with General Zia ul-Haq, then the military ruler of Pakistan, to program countless young men to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Fahd also sponsored programs around the world to “Wahabize” Islam and later was an active supporter of the War on Terror.

Antoine Laḥd – a Lebanese Christian general who became one of Israel’s proxies during Israel’s occupation of Southern Lebanon, beginning in 1982CE. In 1984, he replaced Sa’d Ḥaddād as the head of an Israeli-supported militia in Southern Lebanon at the behest of Uri Lubrani, the Israeli Coordinator for Lebanese Affairs. After serving as a commander in Southern Lebanon before the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, he became the business partner of Ibrāhīm Tannus, the Maronite Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Refer to the following book on the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon,

Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi’a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*. (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1987CE), pp. 115–16, 122–24.

57 Some references from the Babylonian Talmud include *Sanhedrin 54b, 57a, 58b; Yebamoth 98a; and Abodah Zarah 22a–22b*. Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Schneerson (1902–94CE), one of the rabbis of the Chabad-Lubavitcher movement and also known reverentially as the “Rebbe” has stated in delineating the status of Jews versus non-Jews, “We do not have a case of profound change in which a person is merely on a superior level. Rather we have a case of... a totally different species... The body of a Jewish person is of a totally different quality from the body of all nations of the world... The difference of the inner quality [of the body]... is so great that the bodies would be considered as completely different species. This is the reason why the Talmud states that there is an halachic difference [a legal difference] in attitude about the bodies of non-Jews, ‘their bodies are in vain’... An even greater difference exists in regard to the soul. Two contrary types of soul exist, a non-Jewish soul comes from three satanic spheres, while the Jewish soul stems from holiness” (quote taken from *Jewish Fundamentalism In Israel*, by Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, 1999, pp.59–60). A joint resolution of the 102nd Congress of the United States (H.J.Res. 104, March 26, 1991) designated March 26, 1991, in honor of the “Rebbe,” as “Education Day, U.S.A.” Quoting from the resolution, “*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That March 26, 1991, the start of the ninetieth year of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, leader of the worldwide Lubavitch movement, is designated as ‘Education Day, U.S.A.’ The President is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.”

- 58 Gavin de Beer (editor), *Autobiographies/Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974CE), pp. 49–50.
- 59 Refers to 26-year-old Tatyana Suskin of Jerusalem, a Yahūdī woman. The event took place on June 27, 1997. She was accused of pasting the posters across 20 storefronts on the Palestinian-ruled side of al-Khalil (Hebron).
- 60 Refers to an incident that took place in December, 1999. Similar incidents related to pig’s heads being found in *masjids* have occurred before and after 9/11 in those places where Zionist Jews are particularly hostile to Muslims. In one such incident on August 26, 2005, a pig’s head, covered with a black-and-white checkered *kūfiyah* (a headdress worn by Palestinians) was thrown into the Hassan Bek Masjid of Jaffa, just outside Tel Aviv. The name, Muhammad, was etched onto the pig’s snout. On July 3, 2006, a frozen pig’s head was “bowled” into the Lewiston Auburn Islamic Center in Maine while Muslims were praying. There have been other instances, expressing this kind of hatred for Allah’s final Prophet (ﷺ).
- 61 Another incident widely reported in the Arabic media — from al-Quds al-‘Arabi newspaper.

- 62 In Arabic, the Prophet's (ﷺ) statement was, “*Wa yukrahu lakum qīl wa qāl wa id'ātu al-māli wa kathratu al-su'āl.*” – From previous *tafsīrs*.
- 63 The reason the word *bastardize* is appropriate in this context is because many in the Imperialist/Zionist tradition consider Ismā'il to be an illegitimate son of Ibrahim (ﷺ). In fact, in many dictionaries of the English language published as recently as 40–50 years ago, one of the meanings of the word Ishmael was “bastard.” This is one of the ways Yahūd have tried, since the very advent of Muhammad (ﷺ), to delegitimize Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ) and His *dīn*.
- 64 These were the influential Yahūd of the three tribes in Madinah; not the rank and file Jew.
- 65 *Sūrah al-A'rāf:155.*
- 66 Sheikh 'Umar 'Abd al-Raḥmān – a blind Egyptian Islamic scholar convicted and sentenced to life in prison for a “thought crime” related to the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1992. He was allowed to enter the United States on a legal visa and was the imam of a local *masjid* in New Jersey. The Israelis implicated in the same bombing were never pursued, caught, or tried.
- 67 Karl Marx – A 19th-century German philosopher, Marx is best known for developing the foundational substance of communism. His ideas set the stage for the socialist movements of the 20th century. He developed the labor theory of value to critique capitalism, as well as the idea of historical materialism, which analyzed the development of European society through its forces of production. He is also known for saying religion is “the opiate of the masses.” His key works include *Das Kapital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Woman Question*, and *German Ideology*.

Leon Trotsky – Born as Lev Davidovich Bronstein in 1879, the son of a prosperous Jewish farmer in Ukraine, Trotsky was a key figure in Russia's Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin's second-in-command during the early stages of Soviet rule. He is most known for his intellectual contributions to the revolution, for instance, the development of the theory of permanent revolution. Josef Stalin assassinated Trotsky after consolidating control over the Soviet government.

Vladimir Ilich Lenin – born in 1870, Lenin was the leader of Russia's Bolshevik revolution and the president of the Soviet government. An intellectual, his interpretation of Marxism for the Russian context is known as Leninism. While his revolutionary methods were violent, leading to the

deaths of countless civilians, his policies after gaining power tried to curb brutal use of force against civilians and embraced limited private industry. He died in 1924.

- 68 Alan Greenspan – chairman (1987–2006) of the US Federal Reserve Board, which determines official American monetary policy, Greenspan has come to be seen as the face of American capitalism. Greenspan has also served on the US Council of Economic Advisors and the US's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

Milton Friedman – one of the West's most influential economists of the 20th century, Friedman's ideas on limited government, free markets, corporate enterprise and monetary value defined conservative and libertarian ideology from the 1950s onwards. He advocated eliminating social welfare policy and viewed profit as the highest good, as evidenced in his 1970 New York Times article, *The Social Responsibility of a Business is to Make Profit*. His most significant work is his 1962 book, *Capitalism and Freedom*.

Armand Hammer – an American industrialist born in 1898, Hammer was CEO of the Occidental Petroleum Company, an oil and natural gas exploration and development company. Hammer's father was a Russian Jewish immigrant and founder of the Communist Party of the United States. Hammer himself would conduct many business operations in the Soviet Union.

- 69 The world's diamond trade is controlled by the De Beers Mining Company, which manipulates sales through its cartel, the London-based Central Selling Organization, to artificially elevate prices. The Oppenheimer family bought De Beers in the 1930s, with family members controlling the business ever since.

- 70 Joe Slovo – anti-apartheid South African politician and member of the African National Congress, Slovo experienced racism as a communist and Jewish member of the Afrikaner society. His 1970 pamphlet, *No Middle Road*, persuaded many that resistance was the only solution to South Africa's apartheid. In 1992 he proposed the breakthrough in the negotiations to end apartheid with the "sunset clause" — a proposal for a five-year coalition government following a democratic election.

Helen Suzman – anti-apartheid South African legislator and member of the African National Congress (ANC), Suzman served in the South African Parliament from 1953 to 1989. A member of South Africa's Jewish community and part of the Progressive Party till 1974, she consistently voted against apartheid measures passed by the parliament. In 1978 she received the UN Human Rights award.

Harry Heinz Schwartz – anti-apartheid South African diplomat and jurist; Schwartz was a member of South Africa’s Jewish community and a founder of the Democratic and Reform parties. Schwartz served as South Africa’s ambassador to the United States from 1991 to 1994 and was also active on the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

- 71 These activities happened in what are now known as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt; even though most of the people in the area knew that the perpetrators were Israeli Zionists, the people in most of the Western world thought that Jews were being persecuted by Arabs.
- 72 This refers to the views of Avraham Stern and others including later Israeli Prime Minister Shamir that there was a difference between the British and the Nazis, the former being “enemies of the Jewish people” and the latter being “Jew haters.” He felt that the Nazis could thereby be manipulated. To this end, Stern initiated contact with Nazi authorities, in order to enlist their aid in establishing the Jewish State in Palestine, in exchange for collaborating with Germany against the British Empire in the Second World War.
- 73 On November 25, 1940, the S.S. Patria, carrying arms for the Irgun headed by Menachem Begin, was blown up by supporters of David Ben Gurion in Haifa harbor, killing 268 illegal Jewish immigrants. On February 24, 1942 the S.S. Struma exploded in the Black Sea, killing 769 illegal Jewish immigrants.
- 74 Polisario conflict – Western Saharan army formed in 1973 by a former member of the Communist Party in Morocco, Mustapha Ouali, and has since fought against the Sahara’s occupation by Spain, Mauritania and Morocco.
- 75 Reinvigorating the pre-Islamic Aws and Khazraj tradition, they also went to war in Dofar (Oman) in the 60s, Chad in the 70s, Lebanon in the 80s, and most recently Iraq.
- 76 Camp David Accords – political agreement signed by Egyptian President Sādāt and Israeli Prime Minister Begin on September 17, 1978, following thirteen days of secret negotiations at Camp David, USA. The meetings were moderated by President Jimmy Carter. The Accords led to the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty.

The Oslo Accords – also known as the Declaration of Principles (DOP), the Oslo Accords were signed by Israel, represented by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO, represented by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, to recognize the two state solution for Israel and Palestine.

- 77 All of these events have circulated widely in the Arabic press and show the lengths to which these Israelis will go to divert attention from all of their nefarious underground practices.
- 78 Refers to the attempted assassination of the Israeli British ambassador, Shlomo Argov, who survived a shot in the head, but remained paralyzed thereafter. The attack was blamed on Abū Nidal and three Palestinians were arrested and sentenced to 30–35 years in prison.
- 79 Read the article, *U.S. Vetoes of U.N. Resolutions on Behalf of Israel* by Donald Neff at the *If Americans only Knew* website: www.ifamericansknew.org.
- 80 liberation theology – Christian theological school focusing on Jesus Christ (ﷺ) as redeemer as well as the liberator of the oppressed. It emphasizes the Christian mission to bring justice to the poor and oppressed, particularly through political activism.
- 81 The Intifāḍah – grassroots Palestinian resistance movement against Israeli occupation. It began in 1987CE and continues until today.
- 82 Jews, at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), who criticized the racist tendencies of their own Yahūd, include Abdullāh ibn Salām and Mukhayriq. In the modern era, one group of Jews that comes to mind is the Neturei Karta. For a better understanding of their views, refer to their website: www.nkusa.org
- 83 Widely circulated in the Arabic press; several news items in al-Quds al-'Arabī newspaper.
- 84 refer to endnote 57.
- 85 Shulkhan Arukh – the standard legal code of Judaism, compiled in the mid-1500s CE by Sephardic Rabbi Joseph Caro.
- 86 refer to endnotes 57 and 85.
- 87 For the exact text of the Madinah Accord, refer to
 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh al-Ḥaydarabādī, *Majmū'ah al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyyati fī al-'Aḥdi al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfatī al-Rāshidah*
 (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyah, 1360AH), pp. 1–7.
- 88 Roadmap for Peace – US President George W. Bush's plan to resolve the Israeli Palestinian conflict was revealed in April 2003 and began with

sidelining Yasser Arafat with the demand to appoint Mahmoud Abbas as the Palestinian Prime Minister. It uses harsh language against Palestinians' use of military force and Israeli settlement building in Gaza and the West Bank, but has not enforced any sanctions against the latter.

- 89 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999*. (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1999CE), p. 497.
- 90 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 91 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 92 From previous *tafsirs*.
- 93 Refer to endnote 10 at the end of the Publisher's Foreword, p. xxiii.
- 94 *qiblah* – the direction, towards the Ka'bah in Makkah, in which the Muslims orient themselves while in *ṣalāh*. Thus a Muslim performing his *ṣalāh* in South Africa would face north, while a Muslim performing *ṣalāh* in portions of Russia would face south towards Makkah.
- 95 *The Last Temptation of Christ* (movie) – a 1988 movie by director Martin Scorsese based on the 1951 novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. The plot depicted the life of Jesus Christ (ﷺ) with the central thesis that Jesus (ﷺ), while free from sin, was still subject to every form of temptation that humans face, including fear, doubt, depression, reluctance and lust.
- 96 British novelist of Indian descent, Rushdie was born in 1947 and won the Booker prize for *Midnight's Children*. He gained global notoriety with his 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which blasphemously depicted the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his wives, drawing Imam Khomeini's edict that he should be killed.
- 97 Danish cartoon controversy – In January 2006, Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in a defamatory manner, sparking riots throughout the Muslim world.
- 98 In Arabic, the Prophetic (ﷺ) statement was, "...*takhruju qarnā al-Shayṭān min Najd.*" – From previous *tafsirs*.
- 99 Refers to the Saudi-sponsored strain of *salafis* who react to ignorant Muslims (some Sufis and Shi'īs) and their abnormal veneration of the Prophet (ﷺ)

and *ahl al-bayt*, thereby poisoning every other Muslim's fervent, normal and reverential relationship with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

100 Taslima Nasreen – Bangladeshi feminist writer; born in 1962, she gained prominence through her anti-Islamic writings in the late 20th century.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali – Dutch feminist writer and politician of Somali background. Ali was born in 1969 and gained prominence through her anti-Islamic positions and writings. She wrote the screenplay for Theo van Gogh's movie, *Submission*. She currently works as a fellow in the conservative think tank, the American Enterprise Institute.

Irshad Manji – Canadian feminist; born in 1968, she gained prominence in the late 20th and early 21st century for her hostility against Islam, her open embrace of lesbianism, and her support for Israel, which she views as a model for the Muslim world. Manji has written *The Trouble with Islam Today* and produced the PBS documentary, *Faith Without Fear*.

Asra Nomani – Indian-American feminist; born in 1965 and leads the Pearl Project, a student-faculty investigation into the Daniel Pearl murder, at Georgetown University. Nomani has written two books, *Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam* and *Tantrika: Traveling the Road of Divine Love*. She is known for organizing the first public woman-led *ṣalāh* of a mixed-gender congregation in the United States.

101 'Abd al-Salām Yāsīn – Moroccan scholar and Imam; born in 1928, he was influenced by the movement of Ḥasan al-Bannā, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the writings of Sayyid Quṭb. He has conducted considerable research into the Islamic state and has encountered state persecution. He founded the Islamic movement, 'Adl wa al-Iḥsān (Charity and Justice).

102 30. William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton – Born in 1946, Clinton was elected as the 46th President of the United States in 1992.

103 NATO – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, established with the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe. NATO sees its goals as protecting the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means.

104 John Locke (1632-1704) – English philosopher whose theory of knowledge greatly influenced the development of the British empiricist tradition. In *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), he discounted philosophical speculation as a source of knowledge, stating that this must proceed from

experience, as in scientific method. He made significant contributions in the areas of social contract theory, political philosophy, and epistemology. Major works also include *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, and *Two Treatises of Government*.

105 Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*. (London: Pluto Press, 1994CE), pp. 97–98.

106 Alan T. Davies (editor), *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1979CE), pp. v–vi.

107 Ismā‘il Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Islam and the Problem of Israel*. (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1980CE), pp. 7–9.

108 Ayodhya mosque incident – in 1992, a mob of Hindu militants tore down the historic Babri Masjid and attacked other Muslim targets in the north Indian town of Ayodhya, believing it to be the birthplace of the Hindu warrior king, Ram. The incident represented one of India’s worst outbreaks of inter-communal violence.

Makkah, Ka‘bah incident – refers to the late 1979 takeover of the Haram in Makkah. Gunmen, led by Juhayman al-‘Utaybī, seized the Masjid in order to protest the policies of the Saudi rulers. It took Saudi forces, aided by French commandos, two weeks to flush Juhayman and his band of followers from the caverns underneath the Masjid. All of them were either killed or executed in the environs of the Inviolable House.

109 For more information on what happened at Islamic Center in Washington, DC, refer to the website, islamiccenterdc.com.

110 From previous *tafsīrs*.

111 The Enlightenment – European intellectual movement in the 18th century; it featured figures such as Baruch Spinoza, Edmund Burke, Denis Diderot, Edward Gibbon, David Hume, Emmanuel Kant, Montesquieu, and Thomas Paine. The movement privileged the power of human reason to unlock the secrets of nature, organize harmonious societies, and overthrow despotic rule.

112 René Descartes (1596–1650) – French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and writer; best known as the “Father of Modern Philosophy.” Descartes developed the Cartesian coordination system in geometry, the concept of mind-body dualism, the method of hyperbolic doubt, and is known for the statement, “*cogito ergo sum*” (I think therefore I am). His

main texts include *Discourse on the Method*, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and *Principles of Philosophy*.

Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) – German philosopher, mathematician, and logician; most well known for having invented the differential and integral calculus independently of Isaac Newton. Leibniz also contributed insights on the principle of sufficient reason, the principle of pre-established harmony, and the principle of noncontradiction (i.e., that any proposition from which a contradiction can be derived is false).

113 Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) – French scientist and religious philosopher; founded the modern theory of probability. He also discovered the properties of the cycloid and contributed to the advance of differential calculus. His insights from physics experiments on atmospheric pressure through barometric measurements and the equilibrium of fluids led to the development of Pascal's Law.

114 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) – German philosopher and one of the most influential figures of the Enlightenment. He made contributions to the theory of knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, influencing the development of Idealism and Positivism. He developed the concepts of transcendental logic, the categorical imperative, and moral autonomy of the individual. His major works include *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, and *Perpetual Peace*.

115 Georg Hegel (1770–1831) – German philosopher; made contributions in the post-Kant period of Idealism and also developed the idea of historical teleology that Marx would use for his materialist analysis of history as the development of forces of production. His major works include *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, and *Science of Logic*.

116 Soren Kierkegaard (1813–55) – Danish philosopher and writer; best known as the father of existentialism and made significant contributions to the development of modernism. Some of his major concepts include subjectivity, leap to faith, the absurd, teleological suspension of the ethical, and indirect communication. His major works include *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, *Fear and Trembling, Either/Or*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) – German philosopher; major works include *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Twilight of the Idols*.

- 117 Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) – German philosopher and anthropologist; major work is *The Essence of Christianity*.
- 118 Karl Marx's famous quote from the introduction of his 1843 work *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.
- 119 Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) – French existential philosopher and dramatist; major works include *Being and Nothingness*, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, *The Flies*, and *No Exit*.
- 120 Plato – classical Greek philosopher; one of the foundational figures of Western intellectual history. He was the student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle, and the founder of the Academy in Athens, which trained many outstanding thinkers of the Hellenic world. He wrote on epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and politics in his famous dialogues, which include *Phaedo*, *the Apology*, *the Republic*, and *the Symposium*.

Monism – Doctrine that views reality as of a single substance, in contrast to dualism and pluralism, which respectively view reality as of two and many substances. The three basic types of monism are materialistic monism (everything in the universe, including mental phenomena, is reduced to the one category of matter), idealistic monism (matter is regarded as a form of manifestation of mind), and the mind-stuff theory (matter and mind are merely aspects of each other).

Baruch de Spinoza (1632—1677) – Dutch philosopher of Portuguese Jewish origin; major work is *Ethics*.

- 121 Idealism – Doctrine that ideas or thought make up either the whole or an essential aspect of reality; Idealism contrasts with materialism, which sees matter as the only real thing that can be proven to exist.

Transcendentalism – A 19th-century American philosophical and cultural movement that included figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller. Transcendentalists believed in an ideal spiritual state that transcended the empirical world and that was realized through the individual's intuition, rather than through the doctrines of established religions. Emerson's 1836 essay, *Nature*, launched the movement.

German Idealism – Intellectual movement that grew during the dusk of the Enlightenment; subscribed to an organic view of the universe rather than a mechanistic one, privileged emotions and thought as central to truth-seeking, and saw Nature as spiritual as well as spatial. Key figures include Immanuel

Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. German Idealism is closely linked with the subsequent cultural and literary movement to follow the Enlightenment: Romanticism.

Immanentism – Doctrine that states a deity, mind, or spirit is immanent in the world and in the individual.

122 Holy Sepulcher – apparently the cross on which the Christ was crucified; one of the most important shrines in Christianity, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (al-Qiyāmah in Arabic) is built in Jerusalem on the site on which Jesus Christ (ﷺ) was believed to have been crucified, buried and resurrected.

123 Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1984CE).

124 The War on Terror – launched by US President Bush (2001–2008) and the neoconservatives in response to the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001. The first victims of the war were Iraq and Afghanistan, neither one of whom had any links to the incident.

125 Cable News Network or CNN is a major news cable television network founded in the United States in 1980 by Ted Turner and now owned by the Time Warner media company.

BBC – The British Broadcasting Company or BBC is a major news broadcasting service that was founded in 1922 by John Reith and is run by the BBC Trust.

126 Inquisitions – systematic persecutions by Catholic and Protestant Churches against popular movements or demographics, such as women and minorities, historically viewed with suspicion in the West. These include the Medieval Inquisition in the 12th and 13th centuries against the Cathars and Waldensians in France and Italy; the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition in the 15th and 16th centuries against Muslims and Jews; and the Roman Inquisition in the late 16th century to check the spread of Protestantism. Outcomes of the tribunals included torture, banishment, forced conversion, life imprisonment, mutilation, and burning at the stake.

Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn – key battle in 1187 in which Ṣalāhuddīn al-Ayyubī defeated the Crusaders armies that had been occupying Palestine, leading to the victories that would wrest back Jerusalem and the remaining Crusader-controlled cities. Besides the military and strategic value, the battle had the psychological impact of reestablishing Islam as the dominant force in the Holy Land.

Battle of Yarmūk – Battle in 636 at the end of Abu Bakr's *khilāfah* in which the Muslim armies led by Khālid ibn al-Walīd defeated the Byzantine forces of Emperor Heraclius. The victory cemented al-Walīd's reputation as one of history's greatest military commanders, heralded the rapid expansion of Islam in the Levant, and signaled the emergence of Islam as a global power.

127 Refers to a political sex scandal concerning US President Bill Clinton and 22 year-old White House intern, Monica Lewinsky that broke in 1998. The investigation led to Clinton's impeachment by the House of Representatives and his subsequent acquittal on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice

128 Refers to an Israeli presidential election in which the contenders included incumbent president Moshe Katsav (accused of raping several young women), Bibi Netanyahu (used to sell furniture in New York) and a Russian Jew who used to be a bouncer at a club in Russia.

129 Widely circulated in the Hebrew press, this news item also found its way into the broader news market of the Arab world.

130 Friedrich Max Muller(1823–1900) – German Orientalist and language-scholar whose works stimulated widespread interest in the study of linguistics, mythology, and religion. His principal achievement was the editing of *The Sacred Books of the East* (51 vols., 1879–1904). Originally a student of Sanskrit, Muller turned to comparative language studies, and around 1845 began studying the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian sacred scripture written in Old Iranian. This interest led him to the study of comparative religion and to the editing of the most ancient of Hindu sacred hymns, the Rigveda, which was published after he had settled in Oxford (1849–75). There he was appointed deputy professor of modern languages (1850) and professor of comparative philology (1868). While at Oxford he sought to popularize comparative studies of Indo-European language. Muller's essays on mythology are among his most appealing writings. His exploration of mythology also led him further into comparative religion and to the publication of *The Sacred Books of the East*. Of the 51 volumes, including indices, of translations of major Oriental, non-Christian scriptures, all but three appeared under his supervision during his lifetime. In his later years, Muller also wrote on Indian philosophy and encouraged the search for Oriental manuscripts and inscriptions. Among such discoveries were early Indian Buddhist scriptures written in Japan.

131 Duren J. H. Ward – German scholar on religion and ethnography; major works include *The Classification of Religions and The Human Races: A Sketch of Classification*.

132 Refers to the 25 Prophets (ﷺ) mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

133 The United Nations or UN was established in 1945 by the US, Britain and the Soviet Union an international organization. While member nations have a seat in the General Assembly, power is leveraged by the Security Council, which includes the US, Britain, France, China, and Russia. It is the successor to the League of Nations, which was established in 1919 after World War I.

134 Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) – Italian writer and political theorist, whose name has become synonymous with political despotism. A professional diplomat, he expressed in *The Prince* (1513) concepts of statecraft whereby the welfare of the state is the aim to which all rulers should strive, regardless of the moral consequences of their actions.

135 Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) – English political theorist and philosopher, often called the father of modern analytical philosophy. His principle work *The Leviathan* (1651) argued that sovereignty is vested in a ruler when the people agree to limit their freedom in return for protection. He paved the way for Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Bentham to develop concepts of human cooperation, as opposed to ruling authority, as the basis for social order.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) – French writer and philosopher born in Geneva, whose works have profoundly influenced European literary and political thought. In his first major essay (1750), Rousseau advanced his theory of the “noble savage” whose innate goodness is corrupted by civilization. He continued his eloquent attack on structured society in subsequent writings. With the publication of his novel *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), Rousseau emerged as the prophet of the French Romantic movement. In his greatest work, *Du Contrat Social (The Social Contract)*, he argued that power is vested not in princes, but in the common people, and that government must be by general consent. His investigation of the paradox of human society — man is born free, but everywhere is in chains — put his own freedom in jeopardy.

Jean Bodin (1530–1596) – French jurist and philosopher during the Reformation; recommended torture as a way of valid method of confirming guilt of witchcraft and is an early articulator of the “resource curse,” in which men living in fertile and prosperous environments become lazy while men in barren areas are “temperate by necessity, and by consequence careful, vigilant, and industrious.” His most significant works include *Six Books on the State* and *Method for the Easy Understanding of History*.

136 Otto Kerner – Democratic Governor of the State of Illinois, 1961–1968.

137 Kerner Commission Report – the 1968 report of a federal government commission, on which Illinois Governor Otto Kerner served as Chairman. It analyzed socioeconomic discrepancies between whites and blacks in the US and discovered a deep-seated racism in the social fabric. It warned that the US was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.”

138 O.J. Simpson trial – In 1995, ex-football player O.J. Simpson was accused of the murder of his wife and her lover. He became the chief focus of a high-profile trial. National surveys of public opinion about his guilt revealed a split between the white and black communities, and the trial aired many African-Americans’ perception of the legal system’s double standards. Simpson was eventually acquitted.

The Los Angeles Riots of 1992 or the “Rodney King” Uprising – sparked by a jury acquitting four police officers who were videotaped brutally beating African-American motorist Rodney King. Thousands of people rioted in Los Angeles streets for six days, in which 53 people died. The incident triggered social tensions resulting from poverty in the South Central LA and perceptions of LA Police Department’s racism.

139 refers to the Fall of Adam from Paradise.

Glossary

‘alim – *learned person, intellectual*; this expression usually refers to scholars, particularly scholars who are well versed on Islamic matters.

‘amilū al-ṣalīḥāt – *exerted efforts of merit*; this is an honorific phrase that usually follows the phrase *al-ladhīna āmanū* in the Qur’anic discourse. The implication is that there is a synergy between a secure commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and the exertion of efforts of merit and rectitude.

‘ibādah – *conforming and complying with Allah (ﷻ)*; this is another one of those words badly bruised through translation. Translators render its meanings as *worship*. False. It is much more than a devotional or ritual gesture or habit. It is the notions and actions of man according to Allah’s (ﷻ) values and principles.

Ahl al-Kitāb – *Folks of the Book (also People of the Book)*; this expression refers to people who belong or belonged to any of a

number of holy books or scriptures that were revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to the Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the course of history. Most notably among them are “Jews” and “Christians” who still have an affinity with or a “working relationship” with the Bible — Old or New Testaments.

al-ākhirah – *the end-life or afterlife*; this expression refers to the hereafter, or afterlife, or life after death. In a more refined sense, this word alludes to the time-period that will follow the Day of Resurrection and Judgment.

āminū – *commit yourselves to God*; this does not, as rendered erroneously by most translators, refer to the words *believe* or *profess faith*.

Anṣār – *supporters*; in Islamic literature this word has to be understood in context. It could occur in reference to the Almighty or it could to be in reference to the Prophet (ﷺ).

aṣḥāb – *companions*; this also has its Qur’anic context: *aṣḥāb al-nār*, *aṣḥāb al-kahf*, *aṣḥāb al-fil*, etc. The word is also used in reference to Allah’s final Prophet (ﷺ), as a synonym for *ṣaḥābah*. Who exactly, though, is a *ṣaḥib* or *ṣaḥābī* remains a matter of fluctuating interpretations — from the opinion that “anyone who saw the Prophet (ﷺ)” is a *ṣaḥābī* to “one who accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) in his lifelong struggle either within a small time frame or an extended one” is a *ṣaḥābī*.

‘Aṣr – *the sapping and draining of the daytime*; this usually refers to the time of day when a *ṣalāh* is performed mid-time between noon and sunset.

āyah – *demonstration*; this could refer to Allah’s (ﷻ) demonstration through revelation, that is, the verse(s) of the Generous Qur’an; and it can also refer to Allah’s (ﷻ) demonstration of power and authority in the course of prophetic and social history. Plural for *āyah* is *āyāt*.

al-Bayt al-Ḥarām – *The Sanctified House*; this is the Holy Mosque in Makkah which is described and should be maintained as *mathābatan li-al-nāsi wa amnā* (a place of retreat for people and a zone of security). Also referred to as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.

bid'ah – *a negative modification, a transposed variation*; this term in Islamic *fiqhī* (jurisprudential) discourse, especially by those who consider themselves *salafīs*, refers to additions or subtractions from the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah; especially additions. It has a derogatory undertone when used by some *salafīs*. They cannot visualize a *bid'ah ḥasanah* (a positive modification) as a component of *ijtihād*.

birr – *virtue*; this word, as the verse in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* makes clear is the description of Muslims who liberate themselves from a mechanical performance of their duties to a conscientious performance. They are stimulated by a daily awareness of Allah (ﷻ), making them generous with their time and money as a matter of principle and as a regenerating quality.

dhikr – *consciousness*; many times this word refers to a person's consciousness of Allah (ﷻ). This consciousness is not achieved simply by remembering Him, but further by Him reminding us.

dīn – *pattern and prototype*; this word is probably one of the most mistranslated words. The usual translation of the word is *religion*. But in a better understanding of Islamic terms the word *dīn* should carry within its meaning a lively prototype and a social system. As such a *dīn* be man-made and in denial of Allah (ﷻ) or it may be in conformity with Allah (ﷻ) and in affirmation of Him.

du'ā' – *prayer or a reverent petition to Allah (ﷻ)*.

Fajr – *break of the day, the first light of day*; this is when obedient Muslims offer their first *ṣalāh* of the day.

faqīh – *savant, academician*; who specializes, in particular, in matters that are jurisprudential.

fāsiq – *degenerate, decomposed*; this term usually is used in reference to human beings who initially commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) but then later during the details of social struggle show an elemental or visceral tendency to quit from the tasks and demands of such a struggle as it peaks. This failure of theirs is a failure of nerve and resolve at an *instinctual* level. The plural is *fāsiqūn*. The word *fusūq* is the noun, meaning *decomposition* or *decay*.

ghiwāyah – *deceit*; the word is usually used to refer to the misrepresentation of the facts by Iblīs as he entrapped Adam and Eve (ﷺ) into disobeying Allah (ﷻ).

hadith – *a verbal or practical precedent of the Prophet (ﷺ)*; the simple linguistic meaning of the word is “speech.”

al-Hadith – *the full body of hadith literature of the Prophet (ﷺ)*.

Hajj – *the Pilgrimage*; this is the annual meeting of the Muslims in Makkah during the last three months of the lunar year: Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa‘daḥ, and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The mass assembly of people during this annual congregation is Yawm ‘Arafāt, which is the 9th day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah — the day before ‘Īd al-Aḍḥá.

Hijrah – *the forced departure of Muhammad (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madīnah*; in a sense it was the Prophet (ﷺ) securing asylum from the Makkan *mushriks* and also his assumption of the role of leader, statesman, and ultimate decision maker, or Imam, of the newly established Islamic state in Madīnah.

hudá – *guidance*; in the Qur’anic paradigm it is the specific guidance that emerges from the Scripture and the Prophet (ﷺ).

ḥajjī – *a pilgrim*; those Muslims who have gone to Makkah and performed the mandatory Hajj assignment. It is an honorific title in some cultures.

ḥalāl – *sanctioned, ritually fit*; this word roughly corresponds to the word *kosher* in some of its biblical usage. The word extends over ritual and legal practices.

Ḥaram – *restricted sanctuary*; the Ḥaram in the generic sense is the Inviolable House of Allah (ﷻ) in Makkah — the Ka‘bah. The perimeters of this Ḥaram extend to include most of Makkah within them.

ḥarām – *taboo, unauthorized or unlawful*; this word is the opposite of ḥalāl.

Ḥawwā’ – *Eve*; Adam’s wife (ﷻ).

ḥurumāt – *sanctities*; most of the time, this refers to the quality of being holy.

‘Ishā’ – *nightly prayers*; this is the ending part of the day in which a devout Muslim orients himself/herself towards Allah (ﷻ) in reverent petition.

Iblīs – *Lucifer*; this word is generally used as a name of Satan before he broke with God and became the evil being that would bedevil Adam, Eve (ﷻ), and their descendants.

iḥsān – *perfection*; this is an Islamic word-cum-concept. The idea is to put in the extra effort for completion and culmination of any God-driven and God-ordained task. The epitome and paradigm of this human action-to-perfection is for each person to always be mindful that even if he does not see Allah (ﷻ), he is always seen by Him. Nothing escapes *His* attention. Therefore, everything someone does has to be done to meet the “higher standards of Allah (ﷻ)” knowing that *He* is watching.

ijtihād – a legal Islamic assessment or edict; this word infers a rigorous scholarly effort to reach an informed opinion based upon the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

ilhām – inspiration; the source of such inspiration is usually Allah (ﷻ). This is not to be confused with *wahy* (revelation) which is the communication and delivery of Scripture to the Prophet (ﷺ).

imam – leader; the word has both positive and negative usages in the Qur’anic text.

al-Imam – the leader of the Muslims or head of the Islamic State.

īmān – secure commitment, covenant; the word is virtually a distillation of *amānah* (trust) and *amn* (security).

infāq – spending; this is the psychological and social status of persons and people before the terms and conditions of *ṣadaqah* and *zakāh* kick in.

Islam – resignation/yielding; this is a relationship with Allah (ﷻ) more than it is a religion. And it defines individuals and people who acquiesce and adhere to the will of Allah (ﷻ). Like other Qur’anic words, its specific meaning is refined within the context it is in. Generally speaking, it may be understood to refer to the “civic character” or “civilian status” of people once there is a full and meaningful *taqwā*-type orderliness with associated rules.

isti’ādhaḥ – the vocal invocation of Allah’s (ﷻ) protection from the accursed one (Satan); this is done by saying *a’ūdhu bi-allāhi min al-shayṭāni al-rajīm*.

ja’ala – render, cause to become; this word is used to shed light on man’s embedded effort within the will of Allah (ﷻ). It also draws attention to the fact that man does not act alone. This word has to be distinguished from the word *khalaqa* which means to create.

Creation or *to create* is specific to Allah (ﷻ) — only Allah (ﷻ) can create.

jahannam – *hell*; this is the place where evildoers in the world will end up in the afterlife. Its main feature of torment is the fire.

jāhiliyāh – *an era of governance without God, the age of systemic lack of scriptural guidance*; it may be characterized as an “ignocracy” or “idiocracy.” It not only refers to the time preceding Muhammad (ﷺ), but also any time period in which Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* is overrun by other systems and establishments.

jamā‘ah – *aggregation/congregation*; in a more exacting sense, it is the quorum of Muslims needed for a particular task or obligation.

jannah — *the garden, Paradise*; this is the opposite of *jahannam*. It is the place and time in the afterlife where people of good heart and will, obedient to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) go to dwell forever in an air of tranquility, an environment of bliss, and a state of exaltation.

jihād – *the ultimate effort and sacrifice*; it is not *holy war*. The word has a range of meanings and applications that range from a struggle against the forces of evil within the self to the a struggle against the forces of evil within the cosmos.

jinn – *unseen, intelligent beings*; this is an independent species of intelligent and advanced life that will be held accountable, like humans, on the Day of Judgment. Their composition is from the substance of the fire, whereas man’s composition is from the substance of clay.

jumu‘ah – *the sixth day of the week, Friday*; the day of the week in which Muslims assemble for their weekly congregational sermon and service.

juz' – volume; the Qur'an has thirty *juz*'s.

kāfir – a contrarian to Allah (ﷻ); every person who enlists in *kufr* becomes a *kāfir*. Plurals are *kāfirūn*, *kāfirīn*, and *kuffār*.

khalifah – successor; this word has its Qur'anic context. In this context man/humans are designated as Allah's (ﷻ) successors on earth. In post-prophetic Islamic literature it refers to those who succeeded the Prophet (ﷺ) as the leader of the Muslims.

khatib – sermonizer, preacher.

khutbah – sermon, lecture.

al-kitāb – the divine Writ; this word, in the context of the Qur'an, refers to the specific Qur'an itself while in other places it refers to generic scripture. The context in which it is used “fine-tunes” its meaning.

kufr – denial of Allah's (ﷻ) authority and power; this becomes a “philosophy” or an “ideology.” There is a mental construct of ideas that argue against Allah (ﷻ) as Sovereign, Lawgiver, and Authority. There may be many expressions of this contrarian hypothesis and political orientation; but one thing in common among all of them — bar none — is their exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) as the Almighty and the ultimate Authority.

Maghrib – sunset; usually, used to refer to the sunset *ṣalāh*.

maqām – station or post; usually the word has a regardful connotation to it; thus can its usage be traced throughout the Qur'an.

al-Masjid al-Aqṣā – *The Distant Mosque*; this is the mosque in al-Quds (Jerusalem), located in an area called al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (the honorable sanctuary). This is the area from which the Prophet (ﷺ) ascended unto heaven in his famous night journey from Makkah to

al-Quds to heaven (known formally as *al-isrā' wa al-mi'rāj*). Thus, there are three holy sanctuaries: the first in Makkah, al-Masjid al-Ḥarām; the second in Madinah al-Masjid al-Nabawī (the Prophet's ﷺ Mosque); and the third in al-Quds, al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

millah – *constituency, or the people of a country, or a community of persons bound by a common heritage*; most of the time this word is used in the Qur'an to refer to the consolidating of the popular will around Abraham and his Prophetic descendants (ﷺ).

minbar – *pulpit or podium*; most of the time, this word refers to the platform from which the Jumu'ah sermon is delivered in the masjid each week. In a more general sense, it is just a raised platform to give prominence to the person on it.

mu'min – *every person who is firmly and securely committed to Allah* (ﷻ); a bearer of *īmān*. See *īmān* above.

al-mubāhalaḥ – *a joint invocation of prayers on liars*; this term in Islamic history summons Muslims and Christians to an “interfaith” denunciation of whomever is wrong in their characterization of 'Īsā ibn Maryam (Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ)).

mufassir – *exegetist*; one who explains the meanings of the noble Qur'an. The plural is *mufassirūn*.

Muhājirūn – *people forced out of their homelands*; in particular, these are people who are forced out because of their scriptural convictions, strenuous efforts, and energetic attempts at socializing scripture. Generally in Islamic literature, this term refers to the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions who made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah.

mujāhid – *an individual active in jihad*; see *jihad* above. Its plural is *mujāhidūn* or *mujāhidīn*.

munāfiq – *a dual loyalist*; those “Muslims” who are outwardly performing their part in a ritual Islam, but when it comes time to

honor this Islam in its struggle and sacrifices, they show inclination towards the anti-Islamic camps, states or powers around. They feign Islam, while in reality they owe their allegiance to the representatives of *kufr*.

al-muqatta'āt – *the disconnected alphabetical letters*; this term refers to those letters that are found at the beginning of certain *sūrah*s in the holy Text. Opinions are divided as to the exact meaning of each particular letter or combination of letters. They may have a mystic meaning. The following are these “stand alone” letters at the beginning of some of the *sūrah*s of the divine Writ: *Ṣād, Qāf, Nūn, Hā-Mīm, Ṭā-Ha, Ṭā-Sīn, Yā-Sīn, Ṭā-Sīn-Mīm, Alif-Lām-Mīm, Alif-Lām-Rā, 'Ayn-Sīn-Qāf, Alif-Lām-Mīm-Rā, Alif-Lām-Mīm-Ṣād, Kāf-Hā-Yā-'Ayn-Ṣād*.

mushrik – *an individual(s) and people(s) who actively diminish the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and promote the authority of others. They equate worldly powers with Allah (ﷻ) and they denigrate Allah (ﷻ) as “one among many” deities and authorities.*

mutashābihāt – *similar and comparable in meaning; this refers to the āyāt in the Qur'an that tolerate a human immature or developing understanding.*

muttaqī – *one who is actively conscious of Allah's (Ā) power presence and hence is always on the alert and on the defensive pertaining to Allah (ﷻ); this word should never be translated as pious or fearful, as it is known nowadays.*

al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh – *nullifier and nullified; this term usually applies to a progressive procedure in which a latter emancipation overrules a former condition. This is most notable when Muslims in the first generation of Islam in Arabia were transitioning through “social developmental” phases in order for them to break their addiction to intoxicants. During this transitional process there were āyāt revealed in a timely manner to constrict their con-*

sumption of intoxicants until, after what appears to be a few years, the superseding *āyāt* overruled the previous ones.

qiblah – *the accommodating and unifying center that attracts the Muslims in their time of ṣalāh and devotional services.* The Muslims' *qiblah* is Makkah.

qirā'ah – *a particular and authorized cognitive process of pronouncing, reciting, and articulating the wording of the Qur'an; there are seven such qirā'ahs.*

qitāl – *fighting, combat; this is in reference to the war-effort that is mandatory upon Muslims whenever the conditions and circumstances merit it.*

al-Quds – *The Consecrated City; this, obviously, is the name of Jerusalem in the Arabic language.*

rahmah – *mercy, grace.*

al-Rahmān – *the Mercy-Giving; this is one of Allah's (ﷻ) ninety-nine attributes or names. The distinguishing feature about Al-Rahmān is that it stands apart from Allah's (ﷻ) other attributes in as much as the word itself can only apply to Allah (ﷻ). Other attributes are "in a watered down sense" used to refer to human beings. But this one cannot be used to describe a human being. The reason is that it is only Allah (ﷻ) who can give mercy, and humans can only express it.*

Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) – *the Messenger of Allah (ﷻ); also called Allah's Apostle (ﷺ), Allah's Messenger (ﷻ) or simply the Prophet (ﷺ). When this is used in Islamic literature, the majority of times it is in reference to the final messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ).*

ribā – *usury; a particular type of nefarious and vicious financial transaction that generates money from lending money.*

rizq – *subsistence and support*; in the Qur’an this usually refers to the material aid (food, shelter, resources, employment, etc.) given to man by Allah (ﷻ), or the access to such aid, for the purpose of allowing him to discharge his covenant responsibilities on earth. As this aid is made available to man, and not created by him, he is expected to be thankful to his Provider and Sustainer.

rukū‘ – *genuflection*; unlike biblical genuflection, this is when a Muslim in his *ṣalāh* bends down at the waist (a half *sajdah* or prostration) and praises Allah (ﷻ).

salafī – *a person who attributes himself to the first generations of Islam*; today, this word is used to describe a certain segment of Muslims who are, in general, fast and loose with accusing other Muslims of *kufir*. Some would say the *salafis* are the “next generation” of Wahhabis.

shahādah – *testimonial*; like other words, the variation in meaning depends on the context the word is used in. This word refers mostly to two concepts in Islamic literature. The first is the article of faith: *Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allah, wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allah*, which means “I bear witness [testify] that there is no deity/authority [worthy of conformity] except Allah, and I bear witness [testify] that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” The second concept related to the word *shahādah* is martyrdom.

Sīrah – *biography of the Prophet* (ﷺ); this is an account of his lifetime, particularly its struggle aspect, during his years in Makkah and Madinah.

subḥānahū wa ta‘ālā – *Exalted and August is He*; this is an expression used often after *lafẓu al-jalālah* (the majestic utterance of Allah’s (ﷻ) name).

sujūd – *prostration*; this is one of the motions of *ṣalāh*, when a praying Muslim puts his forehead on the ground and glorifies the Almighty.

sunnaḥ – *social laws*; this is the word’s Qur’anic meaning in so far as such laws are the pattern of history, human activities, and nature.

al-Sunnah – *the lifestyle pattern of the Prophet* (ﷺ); or the final set of social laws imparted by Allah (ﷻ) to humanity through the agency of Muhammad (ﷺ).

sūrah – *ensemble of a body of themes in the Qur’an*; there are 114 sūraḥs in the Glorious Qur’an.

Ṣābi’ūn/Ṣābi’in – *literally defector, but generally refers to the Sabians*; the word means one who departed from one belief to another. The Arabians accused Muhammad (ﷺ) of having left the religion of Quraysh to Islam. Some references in Islamic literature say the Sabians worshipped angels (al-Baidawi), others said they worshipped stars.

ṣadaqaḥ – *charity*; the act of giving money or wealth without expecting to be financially compensated for it.

ṣalāḥ – *expressing a concentrated and devotional relationship with Allah* (ﷻ); Muslims do this five times a day: *Fajr*, *Ẓuhr*, *‘Aṣr*, *Maghrib*, and *‘Ishā’*.

ṣalla-allāhu ‘alayhi wa ālihi wa sallam – *may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him [Muhammad] and his intimates*; this is a salutary and gracious invocation used by Muslims every time the name of the Prophet (ﷺ) is mentioned, in honor of his character, struggle, and lifetime. It can also be used in reference to other Prophets (ﷺ).

al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm – *the straight span*; this is in reference to man’s meaningful and directional journey to Allah (ﷻ) during his life-long efforts and movements. It is a phrase used in every *ṣalāḥ* to focus a Muslim’s attention on the fact that he/she is pursuing a path that “leads to God.”

ta'wīl – *superseding meaning*; this word is usually used when the human mind does not have a definitive, graphic or precise understanding of an *āyah* — the *āyah* is open to competing meanings, thus the superseding meaning, the primary meaning, or the original meaning is referred (at least for the historical interim) to Allah (ﷻ).

tabligh – *communication*; most of the time, this word is specifically used to describe the mode of communication between the Prophets (ﷺ) and their peoples and societies. The Prophets (ﷺ) communicated scripture to the masses of people around them.

tafsīr – *exegesis*; simple interpretation or critical interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an.

taskhīr – *utilization/employment*; the word is used basically to inform people that Allah (ﷻ) has made everything in existence of service to, and under the supervision of a divinely enlightened man.

tawbah – *repentance*; it is a contrition, confession, and apology expressed by a guilty person who asks Allah (ﷻ) for forgiveness while vowing never to do such a thing again.

tawfiq – *propitious*; this refers to the confluence of man's will with Allah's (ﷻ) will in any endeavor that turns out to be "successful."

tawhīd – *monotheism, singular divine authority*; this combines in its connotational and denotational meanings all the consolidated and indivisible traits and understandings of Allah (ﷻ). In *His* self *He* is one; in *His* attributes *He* is one; therefore, in any way the human mind tries to understand *Him*, *He* remains exalted — as *He* distinguishes *Himself* in *His* own words.

tawqīfī – *confirmed and constant*; this refers to matters and details (of *ṣalāh*, *ṣiyām*, Hajj, etc...) that all Muslims duplicate in the manner exhibited by the Prophet (ﷺ). For example, *Zuhr ṣalāh* is four *rak'āt* (units). This was the confirmed and constant practice of the

Prophet (ﷺ). No one can come and add or subtract one unit and call it *ṣalāh al-ẓuhr*.

tāghūt – *concentration and abuse of power*; this word is usually used to describe governments and regimes that, having accumulated wealth and resources, find themselves in a “superpower” or “hyperpower” position in the world. The exercise of this kind of centralized power makes these governments rivals (in their own consciousness) to the power and authority of Allah (ﷻ). This aggregation and engrossment of power becomes satanic.

wiswās – *intimation*; this is commonly used to describe the whisper, hint, and temptation that Satan conveys to man. It amounts to a satanic suggestion, insinuation, and imputation.

yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū – *O you who are securely committed*; this is a deferential and courteous expression that calls upon the covenant bearing Muslims to fulfill an obligation or launch a duty assignment. This phrase occurs in the Qur’an almost 90 times.

yastaghfir-allāh – *[he] asks Allah (ﷻ) for forgiveness*. Variations include *nastaghfir-allāh* (we ask...) and *astaghfir-allāh* (I ask...).

zakāh – *freely paying money as an act of financial maturity*; usually the word is translated as *almsgiving* or *charity*, which not at all renders correctly its original meaning. Many times in the divine Writ the word *zakāh* is preceded by *aqāma*, *yuqīmūna*..., which means that this giving of money has to be institutionalized or regulated.

ẓawj – *pair/mate*; this can be in reference to the husband or the wife, even though the average person would use it in reference to the husband only.

Ẓuhr – *noon*; this is the time to perform *ṣalāh al-ẓuhr*, four obligatory *rak‘āt* (units) and four voluntary units.

zulm – *injustice/oppression*; this is the practical result, in human societies, of deleting Allah (ﷻ) as the only Authority and only Power in life. Many times in the divine Writ Allah (ﷻ) refers to *shirk* as being a massive expression of *zulm*. For those who are confused about who the *mushriks* are, they only need to look at parts of the world where there is colossal injustice and identify the operators of that injustice.

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ISBN 978-0-9688591-1-7
90000 >



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